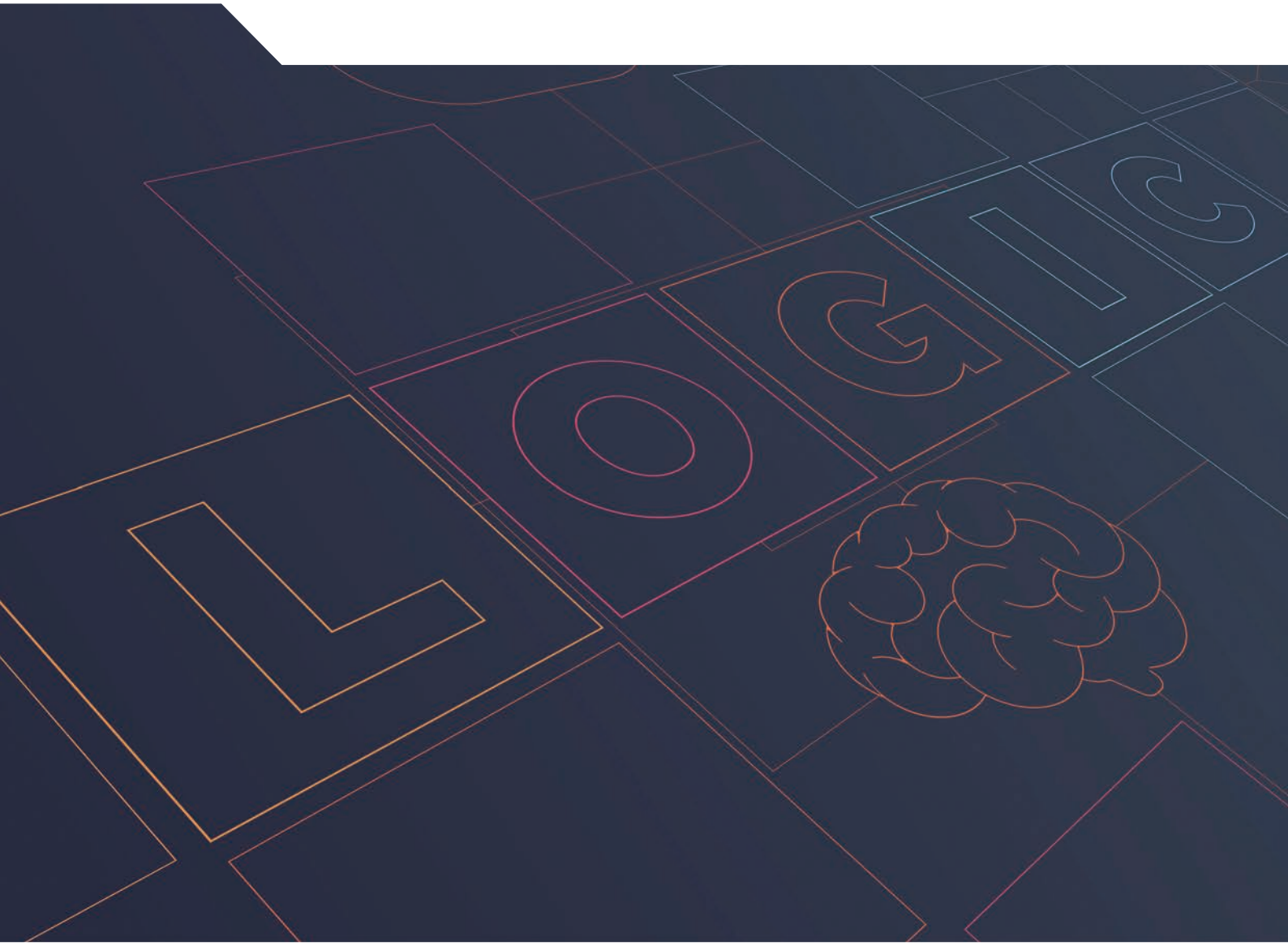
LOGIC: Good Practice Principles for Mainstreaming Behavioural Public Policy



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Foreword

In an era defined by complexity, the imperative for effective public policy has never been more pressing. As governments seek to address an increasingly multi-faceted issues which require concerted societal changes, behavioural public policy presents an opportunity to shape more informed, responsive, and ultimately more effective policies, programs and services.

The best practice principles included in this document were co-created with the behavioural science community in governments and leading research institutions and reflect back the deep and diverse experiences of community members. Drawing upon the collective expertise of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from diverse corners of the globe, this document charts pathways towards more evidence-based, citizen-centric governance.

At its core, mainstreaming behavioral public policy involves harnessing the insights garnered from behavioral science to inform the entire policy cycle, from problem definition to continuous monitoring and evaluation. Approaching a policy topic from the perspective of human behaviour can help policy makers identify important issues, understand underlying problems, design and tailor promising solutions, implement them effectively, and evaluate their impact.

The experiences codified in this report reflect a field that has emerged from its nascent stage as a novel practice and is growing both in the depth and breadth of its application. In countries with long-established behavioural science teams, we are seeing the proliferation of expertise deeper into public administrations, including into local government contexts. Simultaneously, many countries, especially those in the global south, are opening their first behavioural science teams and innovating by applying and adapting behavioural science methods to a diverse array of public policy challenges.

This report continues a series of publications on behavioural science from the OECD, which began in 2017, with *Behavioural Insights and Public Policy: Lessons from Around the World* and has continued to include guidance on conducting behavioural science projects, running experiments, and applying behavioural science ethically and responsibly. We are excited to continue collaborating with governments bilaterally and through fora such as the OECD Network of Behavioural Insights Experts in Government and the National Contact Points for the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation.

As governments across the globe seek to improve the efficacy of their policies, behavioural science is becoming an indispensable tool. This collection of lessons learned is intended to provide inspiration and concrete advice to governments seeking to maximize the utility of behavioural science through its institutionalization throughout their public administrations.

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Executive summary

Many, if not most, issues that governments seek to address involve human behaviour. Governments worldwide are increasingly embracing a people-centred and evidence-informed approach to policymaking, known as behavioural public policy. Applying a behavioural lens equips policymakers with a more realistic understanding of the issues at hand and provides evidence on potential policy consequences that may not be uncovered using traditional policy analysis methods that make assumptions about people and their behaviour that may not be true in practice. The strategic use of behavioural science enables policymakers to identify the most cost-efficient interventions, reducing risks associated with their policy decisions, and can help determine the success or failure of an initiative.

Despite the growth of behavioural public policy practices, systemically integrating a behavioural perspective in policymaking remains a challenge, suggesting that barriers remain to the use of behavioural science evidence.

The Good Practice Principles for Mainstreaming Behavioural Public Policy provide guidance for governments and organisations seeking to embed behavioural science insights and methods into their standard policymaking practices.

LOGIC: Good practice principles for mainstreaming behavioural public policy

The OECD has collected successful management and governance practices on the generation and use of behavioural science evidence in policymaking from various public sector organisations and identified a broadly applicable framework for encouraging the consistent production and application of useful behavioural science evidence in governments and government organisations.

The 14 good practice principles that make up this framework are categorised under the five dimensions of LOGIC: Leadership, Objectives, Governance, Integration, and Capability.

- **Leadership**. The actions and words of influential leaders can play a critical role in encouraging the uptake of behavioural science evidence in policymaking. Senior leaders in government can advocate for a people-centred approach and request a robust evidence base, and managers can actively develop this mindset in their organisations.
- **Objectives**: Governments can include behavioural science in their strategic plans and monitor its use over time. A formal definition of how a behavioural perspective can help a government achieve its strategic objectives can motivate and guide policymakers' choices. A strategy for using behavioural science can apply to both public policy (involving citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders) and internal policy (the processes and mechanisms of public administration itself).
- **Governance**: A clear accountability structure around how resources and activities are managed and organised can help a government more efficiently and effectively embed behavioural science into policymaking procedures and practices. Governments should clearly allocate the responsibilities for mainstreaming behavioural public policy and fund associated activities appropriately.

- **Integration**: Partners, stakeholders, and structures can form an enabling environment for behavioural public policy that makes relevant evidence more likely to be sought, produced, and heeded. Governments can build behavioural considerations into standard policy processes and guidelines and adopt behavioural science responsibly and openly to build citizens' trust. They can also develop processes and structures for behavioural data collection that allow them to diagnose problems and develop solutions more efficiently and effectively.
- **Capability**: Policymakers can learn how to approach a policy problem in a people-centred, evidence-informed way, and ensure they have sustainable, ready access to behavioural science experts. Governments can also establish mechanisms to bring behavioural science evidence into the policy process in a way that is relevant and useful, and to share knowledge and practices among practitioners.

Governments and organisations can use these principles to assess their progress in mainstreaming behavioural public policy. Mainstreaming behavioural science into a government's standard policymaking practice is a complex, long-term task. Governments and organisations can carry out a systematic assessment of how well they have mainstreamed behavioural public policy by comparing their practices to the principles outlined in this document. Such assessments can help pinpoint strengths and areas needing attention. These assessments not only provide a comprehensive review of the degree to which behavioural science is mainstreamed in policymaking but also lay the foundation for cross-country comparisons and benchmarking.

The 14 good practice principles for mainstreaming behavioural public policy are:

Leadership

1. Senior leaders request and advocate for behavioural science when relevant.
2. Managers build and maintain senior leaders' support for behavioural science.

Objectives

3. Senior leaders and managers define how behavioural science can and should help the government deliver its strategic objectives.
4. Managers monitor the use of behavioural science evidence and its impact on government policy to enable iteration and improvement.
5. Senior leaders and managers encourage the use of behavioural science in designing and improving internal organisational processes, rules, and incentives.

Governance

6. Senior leaders clearly allocate the responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural science and establish lines of accountability.
7. Senior leaders and managers mobilise sufficient resources to ensure policy advice is informed by relevant and reliable behavioural science evidence.

Integration

8. Managers integrate behavioural science into standard guidelines and procedures for policy development, implementation, and evaluation.
9. Managers ensure behavioural science is applied responsibly, openly, and with high integrity standards to build and maintain policy makers' and citizens' trust.

10. Managers support processes and structures for data collection and analysis that make it easier to diagnose behavioural issues and evaluate policy options.

Capability

11. Managers build policy makers' capability to apply a behavioural science lens to their work.
12. Managers develop sustainable ways for policy makers to access behavioural science expertise.
13. Managers ensure that behavioural science evidence can be useful to inform policy making processes through quality brokerage.
14. Managers build mechanisms for dissemination and knowledge sharing, such as networks of behavioural science experts and supporters.

1 Why behavioural public policy?

The consideration of human behaviour when developing policies is essential, and can determine the success or failure of an initiative, or impact the pace of change in our societies. For example, one aspect of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is changing household consumption choices (Whitmarsh, Poortinga and Capstick, 2021[1]), one aspect of increasing diversity is de-biasing hiring practices (Murphy, Kroeper and Ozier, 2018[2]), and one aspect of reducing misinformation is limiting its spread (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2020[3]).

Behavioural science can help government policymakers analyse policy challenges, design effective solutions that rely on behavioural change, and dedicate their limited resources to policies with the greatest chance of success. Recognising the centrality of citizens' and consumers' behaviour to policy work, governments around the world have increasingly augmented their policymaking practice with behavioural science insights and methods (Leong and Howlett, 2020[4]) – an approach known as behavioural public policy.

Box 1.1. What is behavioural public policy?

Behavioural public policy is a **people--centred** and **evidence--informed** approach to policymaking (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[5]). It focuses on human behaviour and draws on evidence from the behavioural sciences. It complements and refines existing policy making tools, methods and processes, rather than operating discretely or in parallel (Lichand, Serdeira and Rizardi, 2023[6]; Ewert, 2019[7]). Approaching a policy topic from the perspective of human behaviour can help policy makers identify important issues, understand underlying problems, design and tailor promising solutions, implement them effectively, and evaluate their tangible impact. Taking a behavioural lens to policy research and design ensures that the needs and expectations of the public are at the forefront of government decisions (Hallsworth, 2023[8]).

Behavioural public policy relies on insights from behavioural science literature, and the research methods used to test those insights in new contexts. The field of behavioural science encompasses the study of human behaviour and the design of strategies to change it. It draws on various disciplines, including behavioural economics, psychology, management sciences, sociology, anthropology, and neuroscience.

One key insight from behavioural science is that humans have limited time and attention, but must find a way to process a flood of information (Blanco, 2017[9]; Simon, 1990[10]). As a result, we often rely on simplified behavioural and attention management strategies (heuristics) to reduce task complexity, which can result in decisions that may not be welfare-improving (biases) (Tversky and Kahneman, 1973[11]). Other research finds that we have a tendency to be cooperative and to follow social norms, which enable productive relationships and coordinate collective action (Fehr and Schurtenberger, 2018[12]). Acknowledging these kinds of influences on behaviour and considering them in the policy process can result in better outcomes.

Policy makers have been considering behavioural science evidence for decades (Graf, 2019[13]; Soon, 2017[14]), alongside academic efforts to incorporate empirical evidence from social psychology into economic models. But it was the 2008 publication of *Nudge* (Thaler and Sunstein, 2021[15]) that prompted an explosion of interest in the field, with its compelling vision of how small tweaks to an individual's context (the 'choice architecture') could encourage them to act in their and society's long-term interests. Professor Cass Sunstein's 2009 appointment as administrator of the United States' Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs provided concrete opportunities for behavioural science to be considered when developing regulations. In 2010, the United Kingdom established a dedicated team of behavioural science experts in the Cabinet Office. Interest then spread widely across OECD countries (Hopkins and Lawlor, 2023[16]).The OECD completed an early assessment of the field in its 2017 report, 'Behavioural Insights and Public Policy: Lessons from Around the World' (OECD, 2017[17]), and has tracked further growth since.

Box 1.2. Mapping the global behavioural public policy community

The OECD's crowdsourced online map now records over 200 government teams applying behavioural science in 58 countries (OECD, n.d.[18]), as well as a rich supporting ecosystem of academics, think tanks, not-for-profits, and consultancies focusing on behavioural public policy. This map is a living document, as is the associated repository of projects these institutions have conducted or are currently conducting. Together these resources comprise the OECD's behavioural science Knowledge Hub, which supports knowledge-sharing and community building though its open-source, freely available databases.

Figure 1.1. The global behavioural public policy community

Note: This is a snapshot of the teams listed on the online map. Source: OECD behavioural science Knowledge Hub (OECD, n.d.[18])

The practice of behavioural public policy has transformed over the past decade. From an initial focus on discrete groups of experts improving policy implementation by experimentally testing the effect of changes to citizens' choice architecture, governments have expanded their engagement with behavioural science to embrace diverse methodologies and richer, more substantive involvement in policy making (Ewert and Loer, 2021[19]; Schmidt and Stenger, 2021[20]). Through this journey behavioural science has been used alongside neighbouring disciplines that share an evidence-based, people-centred mindset, including service and user experience design, evaluation, and data science.

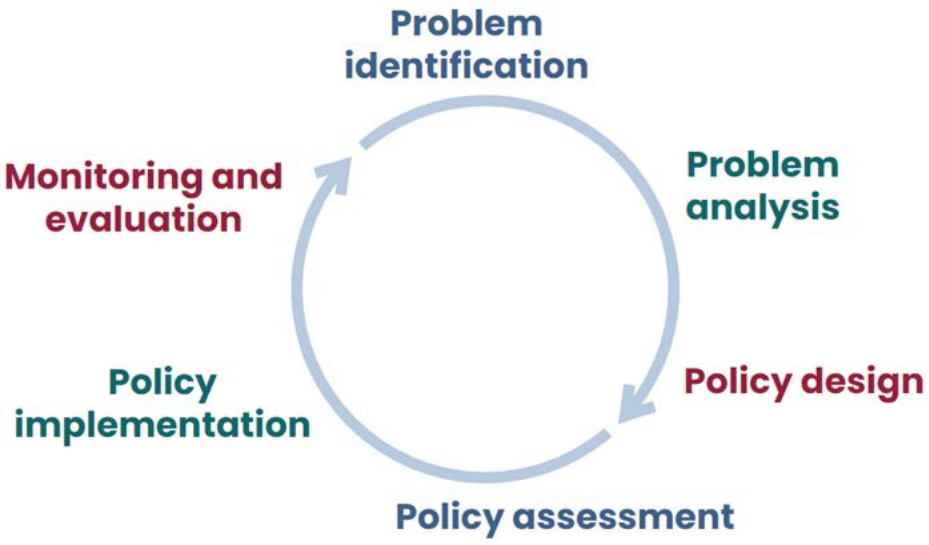
Examples of activities related to the concrete use of behavioural science to improve public policy include: challenging decision makers' assumptions when scoping or framing a problem; conducting pilot experiments to scientifically test policy interventions; drawing on rich and robust datasets to determine the

diverse and changing needs of citizens; scaling interventions proven to provide positive outcomes; and communicating to the public in an effective and accessible manner.

Behavioural public policy throughout the policy cycle

There are opportunities to embed behavioural science evidence throughout the public policy making process (Hopkins and Lawlor, 2023[16]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[21]). The 'policy cycle' is a useful model to think about these various ways that behavioural science can help policy makers.

Figure 1.2. The 'policy cycle'



Source: Authors' elaboration of (Jann and Wegrich, 2007[22])

In particular, adopting a behavioural science lens can help in:

Problem identification. Robust and timely behavioural science data can help policy makers achieve their objectives, but also determine what those objectives ought to be (Chater, 2022[23]). Focusing on human behaviour can help governments notice and prioritise societal challenges where people and organisations are acting in ways that are counter to their and society's long-term interests, such as such as in response to deceptive commercial practices (Luguri and Strahilevitz, 2021[24]) or markets (Hertwig, 2023[25]).

Problem analysis. Discovering how people and things interact in a socio-technical system, and then understanding the diverse drivers and barriers of a particular group's behaviour within that system, can help policy makers better appreciate the causes of societal challenges – often by highlighting the importance of context (socio-cultural, physical, informational, and so on) (Kaufman et al., 2021[26]). Understanding when, where, why, and how particular individuals and groups make choices, inclusive of their needs, desires, constraints, and social conditions, enables policy makers to design more effective policy options.

Policy design. A behavioural science lens can assist with the selection of appropriate policy tools (Esmark, 2023[27]). Behavioural science can be used to suggest new types of policy instruments and services, such as changes to the way choices are presented or new supports for people's decisions (Nova and Lades, 2022[28]). It can also improve the design of traditional policy tools – such as regulation, financial incentives, or communication campaigns – to help them work effectively with target groups' preferences and contexts (Lichand, Serdeira and Rizardi, 2023[6]). Behavioural science evidence can also help identify when a

behavioural science-based intervention may not be appropriate or sufficient to address the problem and where a more structural or systemic solution may be needed.

Policy assessment. Jumping to decisions can lead to costly mistakes and wasted effort (West and Gould, 2022[29]). Behavioural science promotes the use of rigorous methods to test the likely effectiveness of policy options or services under consideration before one is scaled to the whole population, enabling resources to be spent in a careful and targeted way. Research methods that measure behavioural outcomes, such as randomised controlled trials or A/B testing, can produce reliable data to inform policy decisions (Varazzani et al., 2023[30]). Behavioural experimentation and pilot testing can help reduce some of the uncertainties and risks associated with a new intervention by learning about its real-world consequences before applying it to the larger public. By helping governments dedicate their limited resources to policies with the greatest likelihood of success, behavioural science methods help maximise the responsible and effective use of public resources.

Policy implementation. Behavioural science can help policy makers decide specifically how a policy should be implemented, or optimise a program or service already in place, to maximise its impact and ensure its intended outcomes are realised in practice. Seemingly minor considerations can have outsized behavioural impacts, such as stigmatising language impeding the uptake of a free service (Lasky-Fink and Linos, 2022[31]). Behavioural science can help with these 'last mile problems' (Soman, 2017[32]), which may in some policy contexts relate to compliance and enforcement activities. Ideally, policy makers will consider these implementation challenges at the design stage, when larger alterations are still in scope.

Monitoring and evaluation. Defining target audiences and intended behaviour changes clearly and tangibly helps policy makers measure the success of a policy (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[33]). One successful approach is 'sludge audits', which identify unjustified frictions in citizens' interactions with government services (Sunstein, 2020[34]). Transparently tracking the actual behavioural impact of a policy to enable improvements can also help build public trust in government. It is likely that monitoring and tracking of policy outcomes will uncover new objectives that would need to be addressed, restarting the policy cycle with newly defined problems.

Through experimentation, data gathering, and analysis, a behavioural science lens can enrich policy making with an evidence-informed approach that integrates behavioural considerations. By giving policy makers a more realistic understanding of the issue they are trying to solve, and a more complete picture of what changes a policy intervention might cause, behavioural science can help policy makers identify the most cost-efficient intervention and reduce risk.

Behavioural science experts have also turned their attention to improving processes and operations *within* government organisations, such as the processes used to recruit staff or recommend particular policies (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016[35]). Improvements to the underlying norms or structures that shape how government decisions get made could improve outcomes for citizens across a broad suite of policy topics, beyond those that behavioural scientists have the capacity to work on directly (Hallsworth, 2023[8]).

Box 1.3. Examples of behavioural science support public policy

Governments around the world have drawn on behavioural science insights and methods in health, taxation, consumer policy, green reform, human resources, transportation, tourism, and many more policy topics (OECD, n.d.[36]). Some illustrative examples include:

- Recognising that people often stick with default options, even when these are not optimal, the European Union in 2011 adopted legislation requiring sellers to seek explicit consent from consumers to purchase supplementary or add-on services (Baggio et al., 2021[37]).
- Estonian researchers improved tax revenues in the construction industry by 5.1 to 6.1 per cent per full-time equivalent employee by simply emailing employers with a message that was informed by behavioural science literature and qualitative research (Vainre et al., 2020[38]).
- Supported by a national government handbook, various local governments in Japan improved the uptake of health check-ups by changing the default option on a form, providing concrete instructions, and framing a reminder to highlight potential losses over potential gains (Murayama et al., 2023[39]).
- The Canadian government tracks citizens' climate change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours through longitudinal surveys, enabling responsive and nuanced advice about policies and communications that are likely to encourage pro-climate action (Impact Canada, 2023[40]).

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2 Mainstreaming behavioural public policy

This document provides practical guidance for government policy makers on how to achieve a systemic integration of behavioural science insights and methods into the policy making process. After a decade of advocacy and achievements, behavioural public policy looks set to endure. The time is right to gather lessons learned from across the global community of behavioural science experts in government and orient efforts for upcoming years.

Despite the tremendous growth in behavioural public policy, many opportunities remain for governments to embed behavioural science more deeply and broadly in their policy making (Lecouturier et al., 2024[1]). Discussions among members of the OECD's Network of Behavioural Insights Experts in Government indicate that many teams have dramatically matured their practices in recent years. But many still struggle to make an impact with their work and to get their ideas implemented in practice. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, while some believed the applicability or robustness of behavioural science evidence was overstated (Feitsma and Whitehead, 2021[2]), others found it difficult to integrate a behavioural lens into their government's response (OECD, 2020[3]). And some dedicated teams of behavioural science experts still report "precarious funding and insecure status" (Lecouturier et al., 2024[1]).

Behavioural public policy could be considered 'mainstreamed' if behavioural science evidence appropriately and meaningfully informed most public policies for which it is relevant. Behavioural science would be an intrinsic part of the government's identity and practice, with policy makers equipped to assess when it would be relevant and appropriate to draw on behavioural science evidence (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[4]; West and Gould, 2022[5]). Behavioural science would be "integrated into an organisation's core activities rather than acting as an optional specialist tool" (Hallsworth, 2023[6]), enabling a "transition to a kind of policy making in which the behavioural sciences perspective is taken just as seriously as the economic and legal perspectives" (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[7]). The United Nations, for example, aims to integrate behavioural science "seamlessly into the fabric of our work" (United Nations, 2023[8]).

Achieving this integration is difficult and highly dependent on contextual and organisational factors (Ewert, 2019[9]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[10]), but it is likely to require a multi-level approach (Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[11]). Governments have approached this "system-level enablement" (West and Gould, 2022[5]) in a wide variety of ways, with varying success. Examples of governments' approaches have been collated in a recent book (Sanders, Bhanot and O'Flaherty, 2023[12]) as well as by:

- the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council (Whitehead et al., 2014[13])
- the European Commission (Lourenco et al., 2016[14])
- the OECD (OECD, 2017[15])
- the World Bank (Afif et al., 2018[16]).

Some synthesis has been attempted:

- in a private sector context (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[17]; Khan and Newman, 2021[18])

- at the United Nations (United Nations, 2021[19])
- for discrete behavioural science teams in government by the World Health Organization (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[20]) and ideas42 (Barrows et al., 2018[21]).

There remains little practical guidance, however, for government policy makers on how to embed behavioural science in policy systems and processes.

Analytical framework for behavioural science in evidence-informed policy

Behavioural public policy strives for an evidence-informed approach to public policy; it consists of approaching policy problems from the perspective of human behaviour, and having analysed a problem in this way, seeking and applying relevant behavioural science evidence. Behavioural public policy can therefore contribute to governments' broader efforts towards evidence-informed policy making (OECD, 2020[22]) and "evidential reasoning" (Rantala, Alasuutari and Kuorikoski, 2023[23]).

The OECD has published comprehensive guidance on how governments can build their capacity for evidence-informed policy making (OECD, 2020[22]). This guidance models evidence use as a market, requiring both a consistent supply of high-quality, policy-relevant research evidence (such as scientific investigations and policy evaluations) as well as demand from policy makers (Newman, Fisher and Shaxson, 2012[24]). A multi-level approach is essential to building demand for evidence (Stewart, Langer and Erasmus, 2018[25]), including individual policy makers' evidence-use skills, organisations' technical capacity and culture, and the institutions, connections, and attitudes that shape the wider environment outside the organisation.

This report identifies good practice principles that can help create a well-functioning evidence use market in the context of behavioural science and a people-centred approach to policy making.

Overcoming barriers to behavioural public policy

Behavioural steps in the use of evidence in policy making include the need for policy makers to know, understand, and value evidence, translate the available evidence into their own context, and then implement that evidence at scale (Linos, 2023[26]). Each of these steps calls on policy makers to make complex judgements in constrained operating environments and may require them to conduct or commission new research and testing. These evidence-use behaviours are made more difficult by common features of policy systems, such as a preference for the status quo or previous practices, a turbulent operating environment in which new priorities constantly emerge, avoidance of risky decisions, caution towards unfamiliar partners, decision-making authority resting with senior leaders, and a need for rapid decision-making and scarcity of time to plan deep reforms (West and Gould, 2022[5]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[11]).

Models from behavioural science suggest what might encourage policy makers to adopt these evidence-use behaviours. The COM-B model (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011[27]) is a generic, accessible model that has been used previously in this context (OECD, 2020[22]; WHO, 2023[28]; Moffat, Cook and Chater, 2022[29]; Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016[30]). The model suggests that people are likely to engage in a behaviour (B) if they have the capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M) to do so. This report's good practice principles are approximately mapped to these COM-B categories in the figure below.

Figure 2.1. LOGIC principles approximately mapped to the COM-B model

Good practice principles can help increase the motivation, opportunity, and capability of organisations in applying behavioural public policy

Source: Adapted from (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011[27])

Maturing practices and governance models over time

Embedding behavioural science into a government's policy making practice is a complex, multi-year task. While all of this report's principles are relevant throughout that journey, the specific practices that will be most effective are likely to change as new challenges, opportunities, and risks emerge.

It is impossible to present a universal maturity journey for how governments should mainstream their use of behavioural science. Governments and organisations differ according to:

- **Starting points**. Some organisations already have robust systems for engaging with users or assessing policy proposals; others are new to a people-centred, evidence-informed approach. Countries differ in the depth of behavioural science expertise readily available inside and outside government.
- **Policy systems**. The norms, structures, relationships, and processes that shape policy making differ across governments and organisations. The path dependency of policy systems means that previous experiences and habits may either facilitate or hinder the adoption of a behavioural lens (Kaur et al., 2022[31]). These institutional and systemic factors will determine what path it is reasonable and effective to take to encourage greater use of behavioural science evidence.
- **End goals**. Differences in policy topic, priorities, capacity, and ambition mean that different governments or organisations may adopt different definitions of what it means to mainstream behavioural public policy in their context.

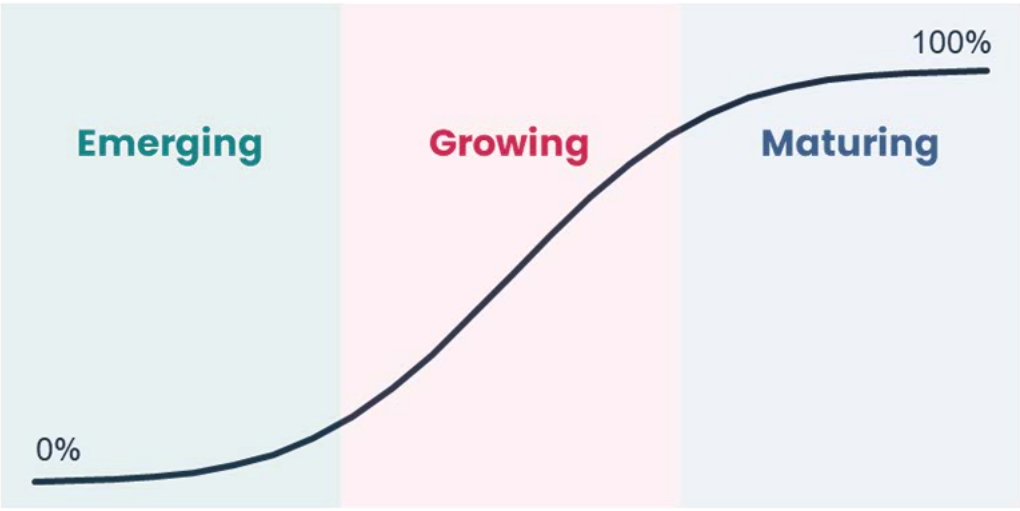
Although paths and experiences will differ, most governments are likely to proceed through an emerging phase, a growing phase, and a maturing phase. Innovation diffusion theory offers a simple way of thinking about how a new behaviour can spread through a population (Meade and Islam, 2006[32]). Visualised using

a normal curve, the theory proposes initial adoption by a small number of people, then a period of relatively rapid diffusion across most of the population, followed by eventual adoption by the remaining laggards.

The mainstreaming of behavioural science can be considered the same way (Severijnen, Slob and Groot, 2022[33]). When a government first turns explicitly to behavioural science, it is likely that this evidence is produced and attended to only in isolated cases (see Table 7.1). Over time the government may see multiple uses of behavioural science across its policy topics and operations. Finally, a behavioural lens may become core to the way policy making is done (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[4]).

Figure 2.2. Phases in the journey of mainstreaming behavioural public policy

Over time more policy makers or policy decisions consider behavioural science evidence



Source: Inspired by innovation diffusion theory (Meade and Islam, 2006[32])

From survey data and other engagements with the behavioural public policy community, the OECD sees different considerations and risks emerging across the mainstreaming journey:

Emerging. Early in the journey, advocates for behavioural public policy need to convince policy makers, managers, and senior leaders that adopting a behavioural perspective could help them deliver better outcomes. Initial activities are likely to be difficult and face numerous barriers, such as low stakeholder buy-in and difficulties accessing data. Initial funding envelopes for specified periods can be useful, but might discourage work that needs to unfold over longer time horizons. Quick results can build support for the behavioural approach, but will probably only be achievable on relatively less significant policy questions (such as optimising the implementation of existing programs).

Growing. As more projects or activities are completed, behavioural public policy may see wider recognition among policy makers. Behavioural science experts and advocates can focus on ensuring their results and advice are being translated into policy outcomes, to avoid the possibility of being seen as discretionary or irrelevant. Staff networks or communities of practice can help ensure consistent quality, messages, and ethical practices across the government's growing behavioural science activities. Official strategies or directives from leaders can help drive and direct continued uptake.

Maturing. Further into the mainstreaming journey, behavioural science experts and advocates can consider tackling policy topics or internal processes that have not yet seen targeted attention. Managers can think about ensuring the sustainability of behavioural interventions over time and at scale to address

likely questions about their long-term impact and effectiveness. With the luxury of an established reputation, there may be opportunities to experiment with newer applications of behavioural science, such as earlier in the policy cycle. Governance models and structures for behavioural science expertise could also be revisited to ensure they are working as intended.

This report is focused on high-level guidance that readers can adapt to suit their particular and dynamic context. Throughout the report, however, we have highlighted practices that are more likely to be useful earlier or later in a government's or organisation's mainstreaming journey. A dedicated chapter then collates these, and provides a series of case studies of how particular governments have matured their practices.

Complementing other OECD guidance

This report complements previous OECD work that tackled specific aspects of doing behavioural science in government, including:

- a guideline and visual roadmap for choosing the most fit-for-purpose research method for a particular policy question (Varazzani et al., 2023[34])
- good practice principles for the ethical use of behavioural science in public policy, including easy-to-use checklists and example practices (OECD, 2022[35])
- how to integrate a behavioural lens into crisis response and fast-paced decision-making, drawing on case studies about influencing COVID-19 pandemic behaviours (OECD, 2020[3])
- the BASIC Toolkit: a generic project methodology for applying behavioural science to policy questions (OECD, 2019[36])
- advice on how to consider behavioural science at each phase of the policy cycle (OECD, 2019[37])
- a comprehensive review of the functions, activities, opportunities, and challenges of the global behavioural public policy community, including more than 100 case studies (OECD, 2017[15]).

Box 2.1. OECD publications on related topics

The OECD has released guidance on topics related to behavioural public policy, including:

- the good governance of evidence (OECD, 2020[38])
- building capacity for evidence-informed policy-making (OECD, 2020[22])
- public sector innovation (Kaur et al., 2022[31])
- people-centred justice (OECD, 2021[39])
- the fair and responsible use of artificial intelligence (Berryhill et al., 2019[40])
- regulatory policy and behavioural economics (Lunn, 2014[41]).

More formally, the OECD has issued recommendations or declarations on:

- public policy evaluation (OECD, 2022[42])
- enhancing access to and sharing of data (OECD, 2021[43])
- public sector innovation (OECD, 2019[44])
- access to justice and people-centred justice systems (OECD, 2023[45])
- improving the quality of government regulation (OECD, 1995[46])

Finally, the OECD has published its own behavioural analyses and research on specific policy topics, including:

- **Sustainable consumption**. The Environmental Policies and Individual Behaviour Change surveys in 2008, 2011, and 2022 explored the drivers behind household behaviour and how policies may affect decisions in key consumption areas (OECD, 2023[47]). Other OECD work has applied behavioural science to energy consumption (OECD, 2023[48]), sustainable tourism (Varazzani, Sullivan-Paul and Tuomaila, 2023[49]) and food choices (Vringer et al., 2015[50]).
- **Environment**. In 2017 a collection of 36 case studies of behavioural insights interventions was published (OECD, 2017[51]). In 2012, the Directorate for Environment published working papers exploring how behavioural insights can be effective in informing green action, including research on default settings (Brown et al., 2012[52]) and moral crowding out by monetary incentives (Brown, Alvarez and Johnstone, 2015[53]).
- **Reinforcing democracy**. The OECD has published on the application of behavioural science to mis- and disinformation (OECD, 2022[54]) and public communication (Alfonsi et al., 2022[55]), contributing to the OECD's Reinforcing Democracy Initiative (OECD, 2022[56]).
- **Consumer policy**. The OECD has explored the role of behavioural science in informing consumer policy since at least 2017 (OECD, 2017[57]), including through a series of recent papers (OECD, 2022[58]).
- **Organisational behaviour**. In 2020, the OECD published research applying behavioural science to changing the behaviour of organisations, with a focus on fostering elements of a safety culture in the energy sector (OECD, 2020[59]).
- **Public sector management**. In 2021, the OECD published a working paper on how a behavioural science lens could help address the shortcomings of traditional regulatory approaches (Drummond, Shephard and Trnka, 2021[60]). In 2022, the OECD published advice on using behavioural insights to promote the uptake of supreme audit institutions' reports and recommendations (OECD, 2022[61]). And in 2018, the OECD published guidance on how to use behavioural science insights when designing integrity and anti-corruption policies (OECD, 2018[62]).

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3 About this report

Data sources

The academic literature on what works to encourage the use of behavioural science evidence in government policy making is generally immature and inconclusive (Breckon and Dodson, 2016[1]; Welch-Ross and Fasig, 2007[2]). In one experienced academic's view, "we are still in the early stages of understanding … how to effectively translate evidence from behavioural economics into meaningful policy outcomes" (Linos, 2023[3]). Furthermore, this relationship between behavioural science and policy is not straightforward, instrumental, or apolitical (Feitsma, 2019[4]).

As a result, this paper's good practice principles are based primarily on the views, opinions, and lived experiences of people who have personally been involved in the difficult work of applying behavioural science to public policy. This makes the principles useful as a framework to guide efforts to mainstream behavioural public policy and consider a government or organisation's maturity in these efforts. The principles can serve as a platform for further evidence generation on how to mainstream efficiently and effectively.

A pragmatic, mixed methods approach has been taken, drawing on the following data sources:

- A workshop-based co-design process conducted in 2023 with a working group of 35 government behavioural science experts from 14 OECD member countries. The working group also commented on multiple iterations of these good practice principles and provided case studies.
- Four surveys of the OECD's global Network of Behavioural Insights Experts in Government, conducted in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The combined sample includes respondents from 202 different teams in 58 countries (including teams in federal, state, provincial, and local governments, as well as in government-funded, independent organisations). The countries with the largest number of teams in the sample are Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States; these countries each contribute over 10 teams and together account for 39% of the sample. Because different questions were asked in different surveys, we provide the sample size for each result in this report (in the form of n=x). Some of these surveys were conducted in partnership with Behavioral Economics in Action at Rotman (BEAR) at the University of Toronto.
- A live picture of governments' use of behavioural science derived from the OECD's online map of teams and their projects. The map publishes self-reported information about teams that covers some of the same questions as our surveys.
- Workshops at OECD Expert Meetings on Behavioural Insights in 2021, 2022, and 2023 gathering common challenges and ideas for addressing them.
- Four in-depth interviews conducted with selected behavioural science experts in government in 2022.
- Academic and grey literature on the adoption and governance of behavioural science in private and public organisations.

In some ways, this report represents an update to the OECD's 2017 report 'Behavioural Insights and Public Policy' (OECD, 2017[5]). For that report, in 2016 the OECD surveyed 60 government institutions in 23 countries and two international organisations, and gathered 112 case studies of behavioural science projects, to provide a baseline for comparing, assessing, and monitoring the growth and diversity of the field. This report provides an updated assessment of the organisation, activities, functions, and methodologies of the global community and the new, as well as lingering, challenges and opportunities they face.

This report focuses on the behavioural science work happening within government institutions. While private, not-for-profit, and academic practitioners are integral to the discipline of behavioural public policy, these good practice principles speak specifically to the dynamics and structures within governments. As a result, the results presented do not necessarily reflect the outcomes or experiences of private, not-for-profit, and academic practitioners.

Glossary

For the purposes of these good practice:

- **Senior leaders** are people "who occupy the highest-ranking positions of administrative bureaucracies and who lead public servants in the pursuit of governmental objectives" (Gerson, 2020[6]), such as heads of agencies and senior executives.
- **Managers** are people who work on the organisation, coordination, and modernisation of the public sector, such as executives, public sector reform staff, human resource strategists, or staff in strategy units.
- **Policy** includes any type of government intervention, program, or mechanism intended to deliver on a particular policy intent, such as regulation, services, communications, grants, and so on.
- **Policy makers** are public sector employees working on the design, implementation, or evaluation of government policy. Usually policy makers are users of behavioural science evidence, although they may also be involved in its production.
- **Behavioural science enthusiasts** are policy makers who are interested in behavioural science and passionate about its usefulness. Enthusiasts can be critical in advocating for behavioural science insights and methods.
- **Behavioural science experts** are producers of behavioural science evidence, including through synthesising existing literature, conducting new analyses of existing data, collecting new datasets, or other research and analysis activities. Experts may or may not be public sector employees.
- **Knowledge brokers** are boundary workers who help bring behavioural science evidence into the policy process. This brokerage may involve reworking, curating, or translating that evidence to make it useful, accessible, and relevant for policy makers. Brokers may or may not be public sector employees.
- **Evidence use** refers to policy makers forming or amending their policy positions based on knowledge derived from behavioural science insights and methods (Welch-Ross and Fasig, 2007[2]). We exclude here the political or tactical use of evidence to justify existing positions or achieve objectives other than policy outcomes (Weiss, 1979[7]).
- **Survey respondents** are members of the OECD's Network of Behavioural Insights Experts in Government who responded to our 2021, 2022, and 2023 surveys. These respondents were working on behavioural science initiatives within their countries.

The roles defined above are not mutually exclusive, and so when this report mentions a particular group, it is likely that they are operating in multiple capacities simultaneously. For example, policy makers may also be behavioural science enthusiasts and managers may also be behavioural science experts.

Box 3.1. LOGIC: Good practice principles for mainstreaming behavioural public policy

Leadership

1. Senior leaders request and advocate for behavioural science when relevant.

   For example: An agency head could highlight their agency's use of behavioural science evidence in public speeches and internal communications.

2. Managers build and maintain senior leaders' support for behavioural science.

   For example: A regular prioritisation conversation could encourage senior leaders to engage with the opportunities and constraints of behavioural science activities.

Objectives

3. Senior leaders and managers define how behavioural science can and should help the government deliver its strategic objectives.

   For example: An organisation's annual plan could include how it intends to build and apply behavioural science evidence to achieve its goals.

4. Managers monitor the use of behavioural science evidence and its impact on government policy to enable iteration and improvement.

   For example: A report could go to parliament every two years outlining the ways the government has used behavioural science evidence.

5. Senior leaders and managers encourage the use of behavioural science in designing and improving internal organisational processes, rules, and incentives.

   For example: Policy ideas could be assessed from a behavioural perspective, but so could the process used to prioritise which ideas are proposed to elected officials.

Governance

6. Senior leaders clearly allocate the responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural science and establish lines of accountability.

   For example: An executive in a central agency could report to a cross-agency steering group on the uptake of behavioural science evidence across the government.

7. Senior leaders and managers mobilise sufficient resources to ensure policy advice is informed by relevant and reliable behavioural science evidence.

   For example: Various departments could contribute to a central fund that pays for in-house and external expertise.

Integration

8. Managers integrate behavioural science into standard guidelines and procedures for policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

   For example: The government's official guidance on policy making best practice could include instruction on when and how to seek behavioural science evidence.

9. Managers ensure behavioural science is applied responsibly, openly, and with high integrity standards to build and maintain policy makers' and citizens' trust.

   For example: Research activities sought by policy makers could be reviewed by an independent ethics board, and the evidence produced could be published regardless of outcome.

10. Managers support processes and structures for data collection and analysis that make it easier to diagnose behavioural issues and evaluate policy options.

    For example: A longstanding framework of behavioural data collection could enable problems to be assessed from a behavioural perspective, and for new experiments to be conducted at low cost.

Capability

11. Managers build policy makers' capability to apply a behavioural science lens to their work.

    For example: New starters in policy making teams could complete an e-learning course on how to see a policy problem from the perspective of human behaviour.

12. Managers develop sustainable ways for policy makers to access behavioural science expertise.

    For example: A dedicated team of behavioural science experts in a central agency could routinely post team members into other agencies to work on particular policy challenges.

13. Managers ensure that behavioural science evidence can be useful to inform policy making processes through quality brokerage.

    For example: Policy makers could have decision-making authority over collaborative projects with behavioural science experts.

14. Managers build mechanisms for dissemination and knowledge sharing, such as networks of behavioural science experts and supporters.

    For example: Dedicated funds could be assigned to a network of behavioural science experts across government organisations that interacts in meetings and online at varying levels of formality.

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4 Leadership

Leaders who engage with behavioural science evidence and promote its use can be influential in embedding a behavioural approach. **The principles in this section call for senior leaders to advocate for behavioural science, and for managers to actively build this support in their leaders.**

Why this matters

Looking across our free-text survey responses, interviews, and comments made at the OECD's Expert Meetings on Behavioural Insights, the issue that the community raises most commonly is the buy-in of senior leaders. Leadership support is seen as critical to secure the funding and structures needed to start and maintain the use of behavioural science in policy making. Similarly, buy-in from senior executives was commonly rated by survey respondents as one of the most important factors helping an in-house behavioural science team be successful over time. Relatedly, 41% of survey respondents reported struggles with getting approval to run their interventions (n=103), further emphasising the importance of having influential leaders who back the use and production of behavioural science evidence.

Survey respondents from teams of different ages generally agree that impact, buy-in, funding, and talent are the most important drivers of success in doing behavioural public policy. The oldest teams put a particular focus on impactful, scalable projects, and on recruiting and retaining talent, while the youngest teams also see value in efficiently using the comparative advantages of a behavioural science approach.

Good practice principles

1. Senior leaders request and advocate for behavioural science evidence.

Support from senior leaders and elected officials helps ensure the effective and wide-scale adoption of behavioural science, both within government organisations and across the policy system more broadly (Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[1]). The OECD has noted that "strategic leadership is critical to drive the organisational change necessary for improved evidence-informed policy making" (OECD, 2020[2]). In some instances, this change process will be launched by a senior leader themselves, as was the case for most respondents to the OECD's 2016 survey (OECD, 2017[3]). But even if it begins with behavioural science enthusiasts within the organisation building momentum at the working level, at some point senior leaders' support will probably be necessary for the approach to be adopted everywhere it is relevant.

Senior leaders can create opportunities for behavioural science evidence, for example by asking policy makers how they adopted their perspective, or by requesting that behavioural science experts be involved in conversations about policy options. Senior leaders can vocalise their support for behavioural public policy in public speeches, internal communications, and forewords to reports, as well as by officially approving a strategy (see Principle 3 on defining a strategy). Coherent and consistent messaging would help drive adoption. Making these commitments publicly could help motivate follow-through at both political and administrative levels. Messaging from senior leaders also has an impact on how resources are allocated throughout organizations, and advocating for behavioural science can take the form of requesting dedicated funding for behavioural science in their organizations (See Principle 7 on resourcing).

Senior leaders have a norm-setting role. By explicitly supporting and calling for behavioural science evidence, senior leaders can tell policy makers that the approach is important to the organisation and an expected part of everyday practice: that it is 'how things are done around here'. The actions of individual leaders are influential in shaping cultural norms about the use of behavioural science and the incentives for managers to prioritise behavioural analysis, design, and testing (Kuipers et al., 2013[4]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[5]). Leaders' influence is not limited to what behaviours they role model and encourage; staff also react to what leaders attend to, how they allocate resources, and who they reward (Buick, 2023[6]; Mols, Bell and Head, 2020[7]).

Box 4.1. Leadership messages to set effective norms

Senior leaders should be careful to shape policy makers' expectations of behavioural science to ensure it is used effectively and appropriately. Senior leaders could consider the relevance of the following messages in their context.

- **Emphasise the benefits**. Behavioural science offers a lens that helps policy makers achieve their intended outcomes more efficiently and effectively. Taking an empirical, people-centred approach helps to de-risk policy making by understanding the drivers of a policy problem, and building evidence that a proposed solution works before implementing it at scale. A behavioural perspective can complement – and constructively challenge – the legal and economic perspectives that often dominate policy making. Examples relevant to the context can powerfully demonstrate these benefits.
- **Encourage humility and flexibility**. Not everything requires a behavioural perspective. And even when it is relevant, behavioural science can rarely solve a problem on its own: complex problems often require multifaceted responses, involving multiple disciplines and perspectives (Soman, Feng and Yu, 2023[8]). Behavioural science, like any approach to knowledge, has "epistemic bounds and explanatory limits"; leaders should avoid putting behavioural scientists in a situation where they may feel pressured to "transcend their knowledge domain or overstate the robustness of their knowledge" (Feitsma and Whitehead, 2021[9]).
- **Create room for failure**. Not everything will work as expected. Apparent failures are an expected and welcome part of innovation. A culture of experimentation and exploration enables the best solution to be found, even if it challenges or discredits existing beliefs or assumptions. Building evidence that a potential solution does not work is incredibly valuable, especially if the evidence generation process itself has co-benefits, such as upskilling policy makers in the use of data and research.
- **Note what is involved**. Behavioural science has a role throughout the policy cycle. Policy makers should identify when a policy issue involves human behaviour, look for or build evidence of what might work, assess the rigour and applicability of the evidence in this context, adapt the evidence to inform the design of potential policy interventions, test those behaviourally informed interventions through pilots or experiments, and then implement the selected policy at scale.
- **Recognise the time and effort required**. While existing behavioural science evidence often has something to say, it is often difficult to be confident that it applies in this new context. It takes work and time to understand a problem from a behavioural perspective, explore solutions, and test them. This means behavioural science can more effectively inform policy making if it is considered early in the policy design process.

Senior leaders also have a role as knowledge brokers and advocates when they are involved in policy decision-making forums (Jakobsen et al., 2019[5]). Policy conversations involve many actors and entail multiple overlapping or competing values, such as the pursuit of compromise between stakeholders with

different views. As with other forms of evidence, to produce good policy outcomes senior leaders should be comfortable engaging in these ambiguous and contentious political processes while advocating for behavioural science evidence with credibility and integrity. This balanced, open, and informed engagement with behavioural science evidence should arise from the broader leadership capabilities the OECD has observed among effective senior leaders (Gerson, 2020[10]):

- Values-based leadership: negotiating multiple and often competing values
- Open inclusion: searching for diverse perspectives and ensuring psychological safety
- Organisational stewardship: equipping their workforce with the right skills, tools, and working environments
- Networked collaboration: collaborating through internal and external networks.

It may be effective to appoint a behavioural science expert into a senior leadership position, to ensure a behavioural perspective is included in strategic-level conversations about government agendas and policy responses (Shaxson, 2019[11]). This senior advocate could also be responsible for mainstreaming behavioural science across the policy system (see Principle 6 on accountability).

Finally, senior leaders can drive the organisational activities – covered through the rest of this report – that are needed to change the organisation's policy making practices. Leaders' support and decisions are critical to implementing all of this report's good practice principles.

Support and promotion can also come from other leaders, in addition to those in formal positions of influence in the public sector hierarchy. For example:

- **Informal champions** can help mobilise institutional resources. Well-connected, high-level officials who are willing and able to generate awareness and enthusiasm for behavioural science can be very influential (Barrows et al., 2018[12]). These champions can, for example, bring a grassroots movement advocating for behavioural science to the attention of senior leaders or elected officials.
- **Elected officials** can also be influential in driving the uptake of new approaches to policy making. Like senior leaders, elected officials have opportunities to express expectations that policy makers adopt a people-centred, evidence-informed approach, and to advocate for this position in policy debates.

An over-reliance on individual leaders can, however, be a vulnerability. The departure of a vocal advocate (such as through a change in government) can deflate a movement (School of International Futures, 2021[13]). It is important for vocal leadership to be supported by other good practices to ensure an evidence-informed, people-centred mindset endures in policy makers' everyday practices regardless of leaders' priorities.

Box 4.2. Examples of explicit leadership encouragement

In the **United States**, a 2021 Presidential Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies has driven the demand for evidence and experimentation within the policy making community, helping to promote an empirical culture and mindset. The memorandum calls for "evidence-based and iterative development and the equitable delivery of policies, programs, and agency operations" informed by research and analysis methods from "the social and behavioural sciences and data science" (Office of the President of the United States, 2021[14]). The President's 2021 Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government adopted a behavioural lens to identify and tackle unjustified burdens (or "time taxes") in people's interactions with government services (Office of the President of the United States, 2021[15]). In addition to signalling a focus on this at the highest level, the order established a system to ensure implementation in practice, including support from experts in a central agency, a process to prioritise policy topics and allocate leadership responsibilities, and regular progress reporting.

In the **Netherlands**, senior leaders, and occasionally ministers, explicitly ask for behavioural science to be applied to particular policy topics, although the extent of encouragement and active engagement differs between senior leaders.

In **Türkiye**, a pilot behavioural science project was opened and closed at formal events that included speeches from the relevant minister, resulting in substantial media coverage. The minister extended an open invitation for collaboration that created space for interested government officials to engage with behavioural science. The minister personally participated in an introductory video produced for a website integral to the pilot project. Finally, the minister disseminated copies of a book authored by the internal behavioural science team to members of the cabinet.

In **Australia**, an assistant minister has spoken in the federal parliament about the importance of basing policy on rigorous evidence and evaluations. The senior leaders of the independent Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) have referenced the application of behavioural science in regulation in public speeches.

2. Managers build and maintain senior leaders' support for behavioural science.

Managers can engage in persistent and sustained advocacy, repeatedly emphasising to senior leaders and elected officials the benefits of behavioural science evidence in crafting more efficient and effective policies. Over time, the individuals occupying leadership roles will change, bringing new perspectives and varying attitudes. Not all senior leaders will be equally open to a behavioural perspective. Some may be resistant to the approach or have concerns about its usefulness or relevance, impeding the adoption of behavioural public policy in their areas of policy responsibility.

Managers have a role in educating senior leaders about what behavioural science is and how it can contribute to policy making (United Nations, 2021[16]). This helps senior leaders have realistic expectations about the likely benefits of producing and applying behavioural science evidence and helps them appreciate the rigour of the evidence used to recommend one policy option over another. In addition to senior leaders in central and line agencies, it can also be beneficial to engage with advisors working directly for elected officials.

Box 4.3. Messages when engaging senior leaders

When speaking to senior leaders about behavioural science, managers could consider the following messages and approaches.

- Emphasise how behavioural science evidence can help senior leaders achieve their objectives cost-effectively, by de-risking policy making and informing solutions. Focus on real policy outcomes, rather than immediate outputs.
- Discuss behavioural science activities as an integral part of good policy work, rather than something additional to business-as-usual.
- Focus on issues important to senior leaders using language that resonates with their agenda (such as delivering real impact, costs and efficiencies, or innovation). Avoid terms and jargon that might distract or confuse. For example, small-scale testing of policy options can produce dramatic savings in public resources by ruling out ineffective solutions and identifying implementation issues before scaling up.
- Highlight previous success cases from within the country or organisation, or from similar contexts around the world (OECD, 2017[3]; Afif et al., 2018[17]). Use tangible, accessible examples.
- Discuss how the use of behavioural science can be elevate the standing of a country or organisation among their peer institutions and the public by demonstrating a people-centred and innovative approach to policy making.
- Link the use of behavioural science to existing initiatives, or to commitments the government has already made, including internationally (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[18]).
- Expand senior leaders' understanding of behavioural science beyond nudges. Emphasise how a behavioural approach can help unpack problems, and augment and complement traditional policy tools.
- Note that it takes time to build reliable evidence. Share interim findings and advice where possible (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[18]). Highlight how useful it is to find evidence that something does not work.
- Explain that a systemic approach to mainstreaming behavioural public policy (through this report's good practice principles) is likely to have a bigger and more enduring effect than implementing one or two principles in isolation (such as an expert team that is unsupported by strategies and processes).

In the early stages of adopting behavioural science, managers could consider piloting a behavioural science team or cluster of projects. A pilot could help demonstrate the value of the approach with tangible examples in the organisation's unique operating context. It is worth noting, however, that the most effective and valuable behavioural science evidence can take a long time to develop (OECD, 2019[19]). A pilot of the approach could focus on cases that are likely to produce demonstrable effects quickly ('low hanging fruit'), but managers would need to recognise that a more embedded approach to behavioural public policy would have a broader but less tangible value, including by contributing valuable evidence and perspectives early in the policy prioritisation and definition process.

In the early stages of adopting behavioural science, it may also be effective to build a grassroots movement of behavioural science enthusiasts throughout the organisation who are passionate about the approach. Enthusiasts could be given a forum, such as an informal network, to explore potential use cases, begin applying simple behavioural science principles, and build the case for more systematic adoption (see

Principle 14 on building networks). With time this bottom-up approach can make it easier for senior leaders to understand and support a changed way of working.

Once behavioural science is more established, managers could consider encouraging a portfolio of behavioural science projects that includes topics of interest to leaders. Generating and translating timely and useful evidence on the government's priority policy topics can help maintain senior leaders' support and maximise the impact of behavioural science evidence (United Nations, 2021[16]). While behavioural science experts can try to suggest topics themselves, in a more mature organisation the managers and executives of policy areas will have the capability and motivation to identify and propose priority topics for the application of behavioural science methods and insights.

Undertaking a mix of behavioural science activities – from giving immediate policy advice to tackling long-term, complex challenges – could help engage senior leaders in different ways. Shorter engagements responding to emerging issues can help to sustain momentum, build champions, and demonstrate the added value of behavioural public policy; but slower, strategic work can deliver the biggest impacts on the government's policy outcomes ((World Health Organisation, 2024[20]); (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[21]; Barrows et al., 2018[12]; Soman, Feng and Yu, 2023[8]). To produce useful evidence in these different ways, behavioural science experts need to be flexible and versatile in their methods.

Box 4.4. Examples of building leadership support

In **Canada**, federal ministers receive mandate letters from the prime minister that outline their priorities. In-house behavioural scientists, in conjunction with colleagues across their federal departments and agencies, scope behavioural science projects that can support and advance those priorities, which contribute to building senior leadership support.

In the state of Victoria in **Australia**, government officials took the opportunity of a change of government in 2014 to propose a new focus on behavioural public policy, among other ideas for public sector reform (Jones, Head and Ferguson, 2021[22]).

When introducing the idea of behavioural public policy in **Israel**, behavioural scientists "identified an opportunity for change that was both a central governmental challenge with clear and significant behavioural elements". The team found that working on "topics of high priority to officials was beneficial in centralising the use of the behavioural insights tools and making them visible" (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[21]).

In **Singapore**'s Ministry of Manpower's first behavioural science team focused on quick wins to produce tangible results quickly. They identified interventions found to be successful in other countries, contextualised them for their operating environment, and moved quickly to implementation and evaluation (Soon, 2017[23]).

Assessing Leadership principles

Governments may be interested in how they, or an external reviewer, could assess their implementation of these principles. The table below outlines questions to ask to understand the extent to which a government or public organisation is making best use of its leadership to help mainstream behavioural public policy.

Table 4.1. Questions to assess Leadership principles

How do senior leaders talk about behavioural science publicly and internally?
Do senior leaders mention the importance of people-centred, evidence-informed policy making in public speeches, publications, and external communications?
Do senior leaders mention the importance of people-centred, evidence-informed policy making in internal communications to staff?
Do senior leaders promote specific behavioural science projects, such as attending launch events or distributing final reports?
Do senior leaders appropriately advocate for behavioural science evidence in policy conversations and forums?
Are senior leaders using their influence and authority to institute the systemic changes necessary to embed behavioural science methods and insights into business-as-usual policy making practice?
Are senior leaders consulting with or including behavioural science experts during the policy making process?
How do managers talk to their leaders about behavioural science?
What strategies are in place to build and maintain the support of senior leaders?
Are managers raising the use of behavioural science with senior leaders, such as through standalone briefings or in the context of particular policy challenges?
How aligned are the behavioural science activities underway with senior leaders' mandates or government priorities?

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5 Objectives

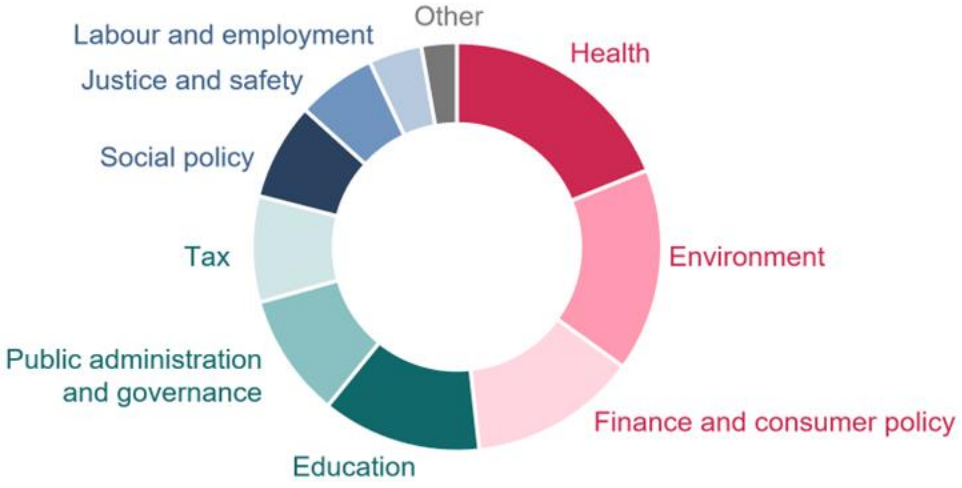
Given the diverse policy topics to which behavioural science can be relevant, and the diverse evidence synthesis and production activities that can be useful to policy making, it can be helpful for governments to clearly establish where and how they want to use behavioural science. **The principles in this section call for a clear strategy that is monitored over time, and which considers using behavioural science for both external policy (involving citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders) and internal policy (the processes and mechanisms of public administration itself).**

Why this matters

Behavioural science experts can contribute to a wide range of policy topics. Practitioners have uploaded projects to the OECD's online behavioural science Knowledge Hub on diverse policy topics, including large numbers on health, the environment, finance and consumer policy, education, and public administration and governance (OECD, n.d.[1]).

Figure 5.1. Policy topics benefiting from behavioural science

Behavioural science experts are conducting projects across diverse policy topics



Source: OECD behavioural science Knowledge Hub (OECD, n.d.[1]), n=143 (as of October 2023)

Behavioural science experts can also engage in a wide range of activities within those various policy topics. Our survey respondents' most common activity was providing advice relying on existing evidence – advice on both policy implementation and policy design. It was also common for respondents to generate new evidence based on their own experiments or data analysis.

Respondents working in newer teams were less likely to report doing almost all of the activities asked, suggesting it takes time for organisations to establish the processes, relationships, and tools necessary to

deliver a range of behavioural science activities. Respondents working in older, more established teams were particularly likely to provide advice on policy design and to conduct their own experiments (all teams 10 or more years old reported being involved in these activities).

Table 5.1. Behavioural science activities in government

Survey respondents are involved in various activities as both knowledge brokers and evidence producers

Age of team (years)	10+	5 to 9	Under 5	Total
Providing advice on policy implementation relying on existing evidence	91%	94%	77%	83%
Providing advice on policy design relying on existing evidence	100%	83%	71%	77%
Conducting experiments to measure behavioural impact	100%	83%	65%	72%
Delivering training and education	73%	85%	63%	66%
Evaluating behavioural impact in other ways	82%	65%	65%	61%
Analysing data about individual behaviour to look for patterns and/or predict behaviours	73%	71%	54%	59%
Publishing your work externally	55%	54%	25%	37%
n=	11	48	48	134

Note: Which of the following activities has your unit been involved in? Age not known for all respondents' teams

Similarly, we see survey respondents use a range of methods to measure if their proposed interventions have the desired effect: 66% report using randomised controlled trials or A/B tests; another 69% report using surveys; and 62% report using before and after comparisons of the target outcome (n=134). We also know from other engagements with the community that qualitative research methods (such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic fieldwork) have become increasingly common (Ewert and Loer, 2021[2]; Hopkins and Lawlor, 2023[3]).

Good practice principles

3. Senior leaders and managers define how behavioural science can and should help the government deliver its strategic objectives.

A central document, which articulates the value of applying behavioural science in the context of a specific political and institutional context, can help policy makers know that using behavioural science is an expected part of their policy making practice. A defined strategy or multi-year plan that clarifies how and where behavioural science should be adopted can help direct resources appropriately and focus the efforts of various actors to produce timely evidence where it is most needed (Dewies et al., 2023[4]; Young, 2021[5]; OECD, 2022[6]; Shaxson, 2019[7]). Attaining agreement at a senior level creates an authorising environment that enables responsive, self-initiated efforts by individuals or agencies while ensuring these are aligned with the government's strategic direction. A strategy could guide coordination across an organisation, a whole government, or even across levels of government.

A strategy could be a standalone document dedicated specifically to the uptake of behavioural science (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2023[8]). Alternatively, behavioural science could be included in related strategies for evidence-informed policy making, people-centred government, innovation, or similar; for most respondents to the OECD's 2016 survey, behavioural science was part of a wider organisational reform and change agenda (OECD, 2017[9]). At its most formal, a commitment to using behavioural science evidence and methods could be made in legislation. Once truly mainstreamed, it may be appropriate for references to behavioural science to simply be embedded into general strategic plans as part of business-as-usual operations.

A strategy could provide an opportunity to discuss, agree on, and disseminate positions on various issues, such as those listed below. In each case it may be beneficial to define these flexibly, to enable responsiveness to emerging opportunities and priorities, and creative applications of behavioural science:

Values: the values that will guide the government's or organisation's use of behavioural science, such as a focus on evidence, equity, people-centredness, actionable impact, integration, or collaboration (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[10]; Aayush Agarwal, 2023[11]).

Topics: the types of policy topics, government operations, or internal processes that will be the focus for behavioural science activities in the organisation, or clear criteria for how these will be selected. The aim should be to eventually apply behavioural science wherever it makes sense to do so. But this is likely to be a broad array of topics, so it may be necessary to moderate the ambition of the strategy in line with the organisation's current level of behavioural science maturity, and the resources that senior leaders are willing and able to devote to behavioural science. When asked what factors help behavioural insights units be successful over time, two-thirds of survey respondents rated 'Alignment with political priorities' 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale of 'Not important at all' (1) to 'Very important' (5) (Figure 4.1).

Policy stages: how behavioural science will contribute at different stages in the policy cycle. It could be useful to explicitly note that behavioural science can play various roles, such as identifying problems, understanding drivers, designing solutions, enhancing implementation, and tailoring evaluation (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[12]). Terms that imply a narrow scope of activities (such as 'nudge') can conceal the broader value of adopting a behavioural science lens (Hallsworth, 2023[13]) (OECD, 2020[14]). Behavioural science could be positioned as a useful approach to improve existing activities and augment existing expertise, rather than as a discrete entity that pursues its own priorities.

Activities: what the work of behavioural science will look like in the government or organisation. Activities conducted by behavioural science enthusiasts or experts could include capability building, evidence generation, policy advice, evaluation, oversight or review, facilitation, creative or critical thinking, network convening, or public engagement.

Methodologies: how behavioural science will be integrated with or coordinated alongside other policy making approaches to ensure effective outcomes for the organisation. Policy makers are often encouraged to adopt various lenses in their work, and to seek the support of people specialising in these various disciplines (such as behavioural science, service design, foresight, systems thinking, economics, communications, evaluation, data science, and so on). But a coherent vision across these advocates of behavioural and structural policy interventions "is highly unlikely to occur of its own accord" (Ewert, 2019[15]). A strategy could articulate the value each adds to policy making practice, enabling policy makers to understand how and when to blend perspectives, and enabling any specialist staff to collaborate efficiently and effectively (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[11]). While there are risks in trying to integrate methodologies that have different epistemological roots (OECD, 2019[16]; Einfeld and Blomkamp, 2021[17]), policy makers often find a combination of approaches and measures to be effective when tackling policy problems in complex systems.

Stakeholders: how the organisation will foster and steward the improved use of behavioural science across its network of partners. As policy makers increase their consideration of behavioural science evidence they will benefit from a bigger market of expertise outside government. There may be opportunities for these other actors in the policy system (such as think tanks, consultancies, industry bodies, implementation organisations, and so on) to engage more richly and robustly with behavioural science evidence.

Internal Guidance: how internal organizational functions can enable behavioural science work and what considerations may be appropriate while doing this work. This could include guidance on the roles that legal, human resources, privacy, communications and procurement groups within a government or

organisation can play in mainstreaming behavioural science while continuing to respect corporate commitments and policies.

Action plan: what organisational steps will be taken to embed and enable behavioural science work, and how these will be resourced. These steps could be based on this report's other good practice principles to consider, for example, governance models and capability building.

At an early stage of behavioural science adoption, it may be useful to first conduct a review or scan before setting the strategy. The OECD has noted in the context of broader evidence-informed policy making that "organisations first need to gather information on current capacities, the desire for change, and existing barriers and facilitators of evidence use within the system" (OECD, 2020[18]). Such a review or scan could help to identify where behavioural science would be most valuable, what the organisational constraints are, what capabilities already exist, and what is needed to begin to mainstream the approach (United Nations, 2021[19]). The World Health Organization's template of a workplace survey to identify key barriers to the adoption of behavioural science could be useful in this context (WHO, 2023[20]). Scans can be conducted in different ways that may result in different outcomes. For example, workshops or bootcamps with policy makers may uncover various opportunities for behavioural science but not the leadership support necessary to tackle them, while official letters to senior leaders may elicit shorter lists that have the necessary authorising environment.

Early in a government's journey of mainstreaming behavioural science, it can be useful to initiate activities with various expected time horizons. An agenda that includes shorter-term and longer-term objectives could enable pilot projects to quickly demonstrate the usefulness and relevance of behavioural science, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for bigger impacts that will take longer to realise, such as building capability across policy makers, scaling or implementing successful interventions, or redesigning internal processes for decision-making or data collection.

Once behavioural public policy is more established, managers may need to consider how to prioritise limited resources allocated to behavioural science activities (World Health Organisation, 2024[21]). Criteria for prioritising work could include:

- aligning with senior leaders' key priorities (see Principle 2 on building leaders' support)
- potential for impact
- fit to the behavioural science approach
- stakeholder buy-in
- having existing data
- having a clear touchpoint with end users
- the feasibility of implementing a solution at scale (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[22]; Barrows et al., 2018[23]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[24]).

Over time, the ambition of the government's behavioural science activities could grow to cover new policy topics, intervention types, and research methods. A proportion of the resources dedicated to behavioural science could go towards developing new tools and approaches, to counteract any bias towards repeating similar interventions in similar policy areas.

Box 5.1. Examples of strategies

In **Australia**, the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) has a mission statement that connects its daily activities with the strategic objectives of the central agency where it is located. BETA proactively proposes behavioural science activities that support the delivery of key government priorities. BETA has also conducted 'Opportunity Scans' within particular policy portfolios and departments, helping to identify policy issues that would particularly benefit from a behavioural perspective, understand the skills and attitudes of the organisation's staff, and build buy-in among senior leaders and relevant stakeholders.

In **Türkiye**, as part of a pilot behavioural science project run with external partners, the team organised a three-day bootcamp with policy makers from various departments. A brainstorming session provided a list of priority areas that were then given to managers as an argument for a long-term plan to mainstream behavioural public policy.

The behavioural economics initiative in **Israel**'s Ministry of Finance set its main goal as helping policy makers "develop critical behavioural thinking skills and a citizens-focused approach when designing public policies" (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[22]).

In **New Zealand**'s Ministry for the Environment, and also in the **Slovak Republic**'s Ministry of Health, specialist teams have been established that explicitly combine behavioural science with systems thinking to develop comprehensive solutions to policy problems (Frame, Milfont and More, 2023[25]).

In the **United States**, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 requires agencies to publish various strategic documents that encourage a thoughtful and genuine interaction with research evidence. These documents include:

- learning agendas, which identify priority questions the agency has about how to better meet its mission and streamline its internal operations
- annual plans for significant evaluations
- policies for how the agency will deliver these evaluations
- capacity assessments of the agency's ability and infrastructure to carry out evidence building activities, including the effectiveness and independence of their statistics, evaluation, research, and analysis efforts.

4. Managers monitor the use of behavioural science evidence and its impact on government policy to enable iteration and improvement.

A commitment to embed behavioural science into policy practice may not have the intended impact of tangible changes to policy conversations, decisions, or outcomes. Regularly checking if the intended outcomes of the strategy are being achieved can help managers understand how to improve the government's behavioural science activities over time (Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[26]). Committing to publish regular updates on the government's progress mainstreaming behavioural public policy, for example, could act as an "external constraint" that motivates uptake (OECD, 2020[27]).

It is inherently difficult to identify the impact of a particular approach or piece of evidence on government policy. In many cases the influence of behavioural science experts and evidence is indirect or difficult to measure in clear outputs or performance indicators. Furthermore, the more embedded a behavioural science perspective becomes – that is, the more business-as-usual policy work becomes people-centred and evidence-informed – the harder it is to isolate a discrete contribution from behavioural science.

Managers should therefore be flexible and pragmatic in how they judge the apparent effectiveness of behavioural public policy.

Managers could consider monitoring the behavioural science strategy as part of broader efforts to monitor the government's adoption of evidence-informed policy making (such as through regulatory impact assessments and policy evaluations). Monitoring or evaluation could also be conducted at the level of a particular project, external partnership, or dedicated team (Dewies et al., 2023[4]). Managers and senior leaders could engage with internal or external evaluation and audit teams to assess the outcomes the impact that behavioural science is having on the government or organization and seek advice on future activities.

Managers could monitor inputs into behavioural science activities (such as number of in-house experts employed or money spent on related procurements), outputs (such as reports, presentations, or attendees at training activities), or outcomes (such as influence on policy decisions). Example measures could include:

- return-on-investment calculations (noting, however, that not all positive and useful impacts will produce attributable cost savings)
- the amount of demand from policy makers for behavioural science expertise
- the creation of new behavioural science expert positions throughout the public sector
- the calibre of applicants to the government's behavioural science positions
- the existence of behavioural science activities conducted independently of dedicated behavioural science teams
- qualitative feedback and lessons learned (gathered through retrospectives or post-mortems after each project).

Box 5.2. Examples of monitoring

In the **Netherlands**, the cross-government behavioural insights network sends reports to parliament about experimentally tested interventions every two years. This report is actively shared with senior leaders across the government. Furthermore, in-house behavioural science experts also report these results on the network's website. Since 2023, examples of behavioural analyses have also been added to this database.

Estonia monitors the impact of another approach to policy making, foresight, by tracking how often foresight publications are referenced in parliamentary debates, the media, and policy documents, and by collecting statistics on which agencies and political parties ask for and use foresight activities (OECD, 2021[28]).

The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that government organisations use its template staff survey to develop a baseline measure of the organisation's use of behavioural science. The survey can then be repeated in future years "to measure directional growth and maturation of the field as well as providing a mechanism to ensure the continued alignment of the strategy with the practical barriers faced by staff" (WHO, 2023[20]). The WHO Regional Office for Europe routinely monitors its member countries' progress on advancing behavioural and cultural insights through five strategic commitments: build stakeholders' support; conduct research; apply insights; commit resources; and implement strategic plans (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2023[8]). Countries' reporting requirements help build awareness of behavioural science among senior leaders and motivate them to support and drive behavioural science activities.

The United Nations monitors its mainstreaming of behavioural science by tracking the proportion of United Nations system entities that have a behavioural science strategy or action plan, leadership roles, centres of excellence, human resources, systematic training, dedicated funding, and programs for member states focused on behavioural science (United Nations, 2023[29]).

5. Senior leaders and managers encourage the use of behavioural science in designing and improving internal organisational processes, rules, and incentives.

A focus on the government's or the organisation's core business – that is, designing and delivering policies, programs, and services for the public – is central to mainstreaming behavioural public policy. But a secondary focus on the internal procedures that shape how that core business gets done has the potential to ultimately have powerful, cascading effects for the public. Improvements to the underlying standards, guidelines, norms, or structures that shape how government decisions get made could improve outcomes for citizens across a broad suite of policy topics, beyond those that behavioural science experts have the capacity to work on directly (Gauri, 2018[30]). An approach of working on underlying organisational features, rather than on explicit projects, may also be more resilient to leaders' changing demand for behavioural science over time (Hallsworth, 2023[13]).

Looking within the government for opportunities to apply behavioural science has the potential to make the organisation more effective generally (for example, by reducing biases in recruitment processes). The term 'behavioural public administration' has been used to describe efforts to improve the way governments operate by recognising that policy makers – both public servants and elected officials – are themselves susceptible to cognitive biases and social influences (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016[31]; BIT, 2018[32]; Battaglio et al., 2018[33]; Drummond, Shephard and Trnka, 2021[34]; Hirsch and Wong-Parodi, 2023[35]). The systems and processes policy makers operate in do not necessarily counteract these biases, and in fact they may exacerbate them (for example, in the ways that risks are perceived and assessed) (Viscusi and Gayer, 2015[36]).

An internal focus can also help create the conditions – sometimes referred to as the 'choice infrastructure' – for influencing behaviours and outcomes across a wide range of policy topics (Schmidt, 2022[37]). In the context of government services, for example, an organisation's performance metrics, incentives, and norms all contribute to an operating environment that shapes the behaviour of both citizens and the government employees they engage with (Downe, 2019[38]). One useful model named SPACE suggests assessing and improving the following aspects of a policy system (Schmidt, 2022[37]):

- Standards (broadly agreed-upon definitions and goals)
- Processes (formal procedures and guidance)
- Accountability (sense of ownership and commitment)
- Culture within systems (informal or institutional norms of what is acceptable)
- Evaluative feedback (mechanisms to understand system functioning).

Box 5.3. Examples of looking internally

Canada has a dedicated team in the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer that focuses on applying behavioural science to people management and the future of work across the federal public service. This team has conducted a series of behavioural science initiatives ranging from increasing

digital workplace skills acquisition to developing tools to improve team cohesion in a hybrid work environment.

In the Canadian province of British Columbia, the central behavioural science team balances their effort between externally facing policies and internal procedures, such as records management, digital security, and human resources.

In **Türkiye**'s Ministry of Trade, a dedicated behavioural science team organised a bootcamp event to gather opportunities for behavioural science across the organisation. This collaborative effort led to the development of an action plan that encompasses both internal and external priority areas. For example, the team helped create welcome packs for newcomers to facilitate their integration into the ministry by providing guidance on what to do in their initial days and fostering a sense of belonging.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Government Communications Service has been applying behavioural science to drive further improvements in organisational wellbeing and performance. This has included exercises designed to match high-level organisational values to the specific behaviours that those values represent, so that steps can be taken to identify barriers and solutions to the desired behaviours. It has also included team exercises run to develop action plans for responding to Civil Service People Survey results, a staff survey run across all UK government departments intended to measure civil servants' attitudes to and experience of working in government departments.

A robust critique of how internal and external policies get made could identify opportunities to challenge assumptions, engage diverse voices, and more appropriately embed policy decisions in their social, cultural, and institutional context (Straßheim, 2020[39]).

Assessing Objectives principles

Governments may be interested in how they, or an external reviewer, could assess their implementation of these principles. The table below outlines questions to ask to understand the extent to which a government or public organisation has effectively defined its objectives for the use of behavioural science in policy making.

Table 5.2. Questions to assess Objectives principles

How has the government or organisation defined and prioritised its use of behavioural science?
How is behavioural science discussed in the government's strategies and plans?
Is there a plan specifying where and how behavioural science is relevant to the government's priorities?
Has there been a comprehensive assessment of the organisation's behavioural science capabilities and opportunities?
Has the government considered how behavioural science can complement and augment other people-centred, evidence-informed approaches to policy making?
Is there a plan to use behavioural science for shorter-term and longer-term results?
How are behavioural science activities and their impacts monitored over time?
Is the government or organisation tracking the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of behavioural science activities?
Are there specific metrics or indicators that are used to assess the success of behavioural science-informed initiatives?
Is behavioural science evidence cited in official documents that justify particular policy options?
Is human behaviour considered as part of policy makers' problem definition and analysis?
How is the government or organisation balancing the use of behavioural science for external and internal policy making?
Are behavioural science insights and methods considered when designing or improving organisational processes?

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6 Governance

Implementing a strategy to embed behavioural science into business-as-usual policy making takes effort and resources. Implementation will be more efficient and effective if there is a structure around how these resources and efforts are managed and organised. **The principles in this section suggest an individual or team can be held accountable for mainstreaming behavioural public policy and be appropriately funded to do so.**

Why this matters

Governments actively grapple with how to organise and manage their behavioural science initiatives. Most survey respondents told us there was discussion about governance arrangements when their team was set up. In free text responses, some told us they have "endless discussions about the pros and cons" of different models.

In 2017, the OECD identified three governance models which describe at least some of this diversity (OECD, 2017[1]). In our surveys between 2021 and 2023, 75 respondents described which of these models best applies to them:

- 24% identified with the **central model**: specialised units, usually within the Centre of Government (such as the prime minister's office), focusing on applying behavioural science across government.
- 39% identified with the **diffuse model**: units embedded within a department or specialised agency at the central government or local government level applying behavioural science.
- 13% identified with the **project model**: behavioural science applied for specific projects and initiatives.

These models overlap, co-exist, and evolve over time: 12% of respondents noted that their model is a combination of the three. These models also do not comprehensively describe the variety of governance arrangements being used, even in this focused sample: another 12% of respondents stated that their model is something else entirely. An alternative framework for considering how policy makers can access behavioural science expertise is introduced in Figure under Principle 12.

Discussion about behavioural public policy often focuses on the work of expert teams, often called 'behavioural insights teams' (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[2]). But at least in our sample of government teams that apply behavioural science, almost 6 in 10 have fewer than 5 people doing so in the team. Sometimes there is only one person applying behavioural science in the team. These teams, whether they identify as 'behavioural insights units' or not, may include members who are not applying behavioural science to their work. The remaining 4 in 10 teams in our sample include 5 to 20 or more people applying behavioural science.

Figure 6.1. Size of government teams applying behavioural science

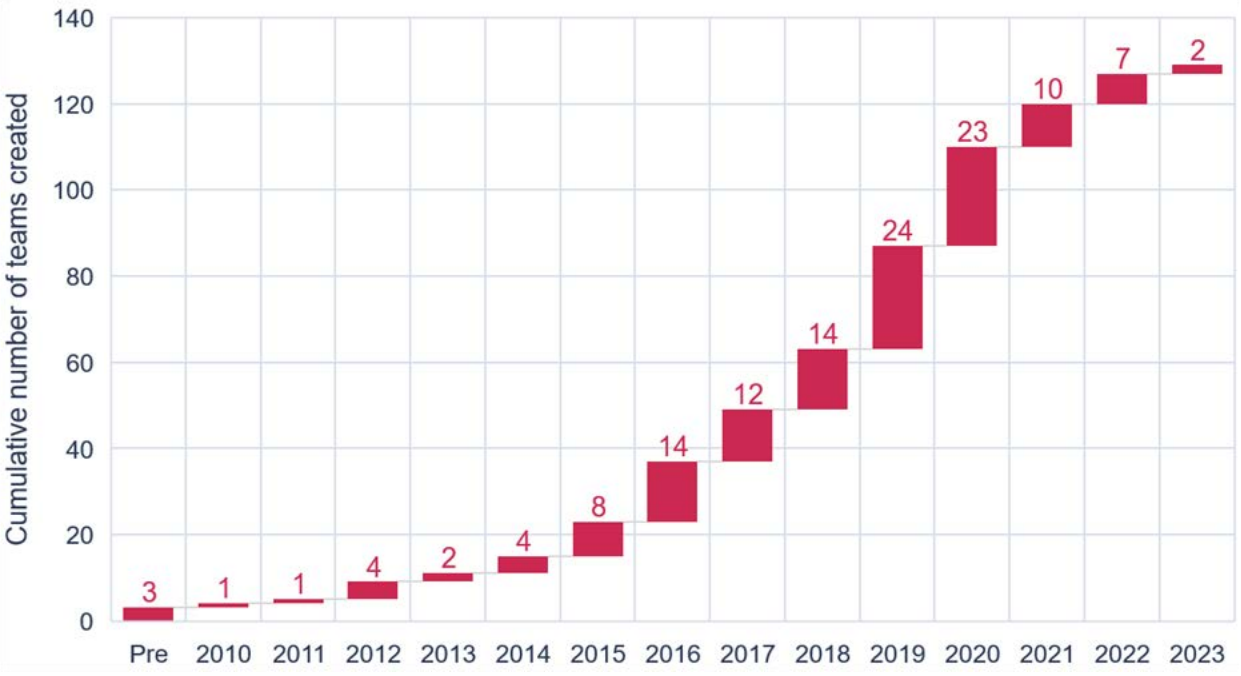
Most teams applying behavioural science have few people dedicated to behavioural science

Note: How many people, including yourself, apply behavioural science in your team? n=160

Many survey respondents work in teams that have turned to behavioural science recently. About half of respondents' teams were created in the last 5 years; another 4 in 10 are between 5 and 9 years old; and only 1 in 10 have been doing behavioural science work for 10 or more years.

Figure 6.2. Age of government teams applying behavioural science

About half of survey respondents' teams were created since 2019



Note: Approximately what year was your team created at your organisation? n=129

The most established teams tend to be slightly larger, but there is not a clear or simple relationship between age and size: there is an average of 7.3 people applying behavioural science in teams aged 10 or more years, compared to 5.4 in teams aged 5 to 9, and 6.6 in teams under 5 (n=128).

Most survey respondents report that their main source of funding is government funding through their organisation (86%, n=109). But some receive ad hoc funding from other government partners or external sources, which could include international or philanthropic organisations. Almost half of survey

respondents told us their team was funded for an initial time window (26 out of n=58). For most, this initial window was at least 2 years, but some were funded for up to 5 years.

Good practice principles

6. Senior leaders clearly allocate the responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural science and establish lines of accountability.

Evidence-informed and people-centred approaches to policy making have been progressively developed over the last decades, often challenging existing ways of working. Policy systems are path dependent and historically shaped, meaning they tend to reproduce the same patterns over time, carrying forward historical protocols, traditions, embedded understandings, and institutional values (Kaur et al., 2022[3]). As a result, innovative practices often need an explicit push to reach the mainstream. This involves a change management process (Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[4]), which is likely to be more effective if a person or team is held responsible for driving that change (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[5]).

It may be effective to designate a particular government official who is responsible for mainstreaming behavioural public policy in line with the agreed strategy, enabling them to be held accountable – such as through performance indicators – for the change management process. This individual would have the authority to drive change and implement practices, as well as "the seniority to advise elected representatives on the use of evidence (Shaxson, 2019[6])". The responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural public policy could be treated as part of a broader government agenda, such as a move towards citizen centricity or evidence-informed policy making. This responsibility could be assigned to a political appointee who has influence with elected officials, or to a government official in the public service who may be more able to create structures and processes that are sustainable in the long term.

Mainstreaming behavioural public policy and implementing this report's various principles takes effort, which means dedicated staff can help make the change happen. The OECD has noted that "embedding evidence-informed approaches in policy making requires strategic and committed leadership, for example from the centre of government, or from units with a mandate for delivering the program of government" (OECD, 2020[7]). Central agencies have often had a role in promoting behavioural science (Jones, Head and Ferguson, 2021[8]), given their ability to access senior leaders and decision-making processes, influence government priorities and strategies, and identify connections and opportunities across policy topics.

Dedicated staff located strategically at the centre of government may help drive a cross-government mainstreaming process (OECD, 2019[9]); similarly, dedicated staff in a central function within a particular portfolio or department could drive a mainstreaming process within that organisation. These staff could be behavioural science experts themselves. But behavioural science experts may be organised and managed in a variety of ways, varying from dedicated teams, to dispersed or matrixed models, to strategic partnerships with external bodies. These options are discussed under Principle 10 (access to expertise).

Additional accountability arrangements may be useful in motivating and guiding the process of mainstreaming behavioural public policy. A steering or advisory group can help to prioritise efforts, connect different parts of the policy system, champion the approach, guide activities at a technical level, or enhance the credibility and reliability of the government's behavioural science work (World Health Organisation, 2024[10])) (Shaxson, 2019[6]; Aayush Agarwal, 2023[11]). The composition of a group – or multiple groups – should reflect its intended purpose. Steering or advisory groups could include internal or external stakeholders, managers from various agencies, academics, and so on.

Governments further into the journey of mainstreaming behavioural science could consider using independent oversight mechanisms to monitor and help drive uptake among parts of the public sector

where uptake is lagging (OECD, 2020[12]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[4]). A function could check if policy makers are indeed seeking and implementing behavioural science evidence in line with the government's strategy (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[13]). Similarly, existing oversight bodies and processes – such as parliamentary committees, policy coordination teams in central agencies, evaluations, audits, and regulatory impact assessments – could assess policy makers' use of behavioural science when they review policies.

Box 6.1. Examples of allocating responsibility and accountability

In the **United Kingdom**'s international aid agency in 2014, senior leaders created a position responsible for the organisation's adoption of behavioural science (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[5]). The function has now expanded as part of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, and a senior steering group of government officials shape the direction of priority behavioural science initiatives.

In **Türkiye**'s Ministry of Trade, a central team was given sole responsibility for helping other parts of the organisation embed behavioural science into their policy making. They established an academic advisory group to assist with promoting behavioural science and building capability among policy makers.

In **Australia**'s federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, senior leaders require regular reports from a dedicated behavioural science team. On a weekly basis, the team reports achievements across the focus activities agreed in the team's strategy: projects and data analysis; capability and partnerships; and behavioural communications and guidance. Additionally, every six months the team showcases its impact to senior leaders in a two-page placemat that includes metrics on attendance at workshops and presentations, returning customers and referrals, and access to the team's capability resources, as well as case studies about larger projects and other outputs.

7. Senior leaders and managers mobilise sufficient resources to ensure policy advice is informed by relevant and reliable behavioural science evidence.

It takes time and effort both to coordinate a people-centred, evidence-informed approach across the policy system and to conduct the actual activities needed to produce useful behavioural science evidence on particular policy problems (OECD, 2020[14]) (Jakobsen et al., 2019[15]). These activities are likely to require some combination of internal staff time, external partnerships, and practical expenses (such as data infrastructure, software, literature access, maintaining a website, or contracting a social research company to recruit research participants). Senior leaders need to ensure sufficient funds are allocated to these activities, and managers need to include them in their business plans. Funding can be aligned with the agreed strategy for what the government wants to achieve over what time frame.

Funding sources can include:

Direct allocation through central budget processes (Lecouturier et al., 2024[16]). Some funding at the centre of government can help support a coherent, cross-government effort to drive behavioural public policy that is strategically managed and steered. A central allocation could either be specific to behavioural science or one element of a broader program (such as a program related to evidence use, digitalisation, customer centricity, and so on).

Areas with discrete policy responsibilities, such as particular ministries or agencies. This arrangement can increase managers' sense of ownership over the work, potentially increasing the chances for meaningful impact on policy design and implementation decisions (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010[17]). Organisations could fund their own behavioural science experts or activities, or they could contribute funds

to a dedicated team at the centre of government. Agencies could fund the central team through regular and routine contributions to a shared fund, or on an ad hoc basis for particular projects or workstreams.

External funding sources. Programs that encourage capacity building in governments can be leveraged to access behavioural science resources, although these sources are often limited in scope and funding amounts. These programs can often take the form of academic groups aiming to encourage collaboration with governments, international organisations or federal governments seeking to build policymaking or research capacity in governments and government organisations, and philanthropic foundations partnering with governments to address particular policy (United Cities and Local Governments, 2021[18])

Some combination. For example, the staff costs of a dedicated team of experts could be funded centrally, with project costs covered by the policy making teams they partner with.

Senior leaders need to allocate sufficient funds to enable reliable, timely behavioural science advice based on rigorous, ethical methods across the spectrum of issues they are interested in. These activities include the following.

Reviewing and synthesising existing evidence can be valuable (WHO, 2021[19]), although even this takes time and effort to do carefully and rigorously.

Testing, learning, and adapting is almost always advisable to produce reliable and valid evidence for a particular policy problem, because human behaviour is considerably context dependent (Linos, 2023[20]; WHO, 2021[19]). This testing takes extra time and resources. A recent review concluded that behavioural science "has not yet produced generalisable and implementable practice guidance and intervention design strategies for determining what works, when, and for whom" (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023[21]), meaning that new evaluation and testing is advisable each time to determine if a proposed solution will be effective in its intended context.

Interpreting and repackaging behavioural science evidence to be useful in contested and values-based policy development conversations takes additional work and time (Feitsma, 2018[22]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[16]) (see Principle 13 on knowledge brokerage). In an organisation that has fully mainstreamed behavioural public policy, any policy maker may have the skills to play that knowledge broker role; earlier in the adoption journey, however, it is likely that behavioural science experts will need to devote some of their own time to be involved in the policy process.

Supporting the broader system of behavioural science evidence production outside government organisations, including through allocating research funds to academics working in the social and behavioural sciences, can diversify sources of expertise and enrich public policy debates.

Finally, senior leaders can fund behavioural science experts in a way that confers a sense of psychological safety (OECD, 2019[23]). Any innovative approach to policy making entails risk, and testing solutions inevitably means determining that some do not work as hoped (United Nations, 2021[24]). Apparent failures should be expected and then embraced as learning opportunities. This applies to particular behavioural interventions, but also to the organisation's approach to behavioural science more generally. An initial funding envelope with a sunset provision can be an effective way to give behavioural science experts time and opportunity to experiment with their ways of working and find an operating rhythm that is effective in their context (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[13]), although a plan can be developed to enable the continuity of behavioural science work beyond this initial mandate.

Box 6.2. Examples of funding arrangements

The **Norwegian** Tax Administration has a dedicated behavioural science team that conducts data collection and research activities. Data collection and research activities are funded by the divisions that commission the analysis.

In **Australia**, the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) works across all policy topics. The central department that hosts BETA funds its staff costs, as well as some operational expenses such as ethical reviews and data management tools. Within particular projects, partner agencies cover other practical expenses, such as research recruitment costs and translations.

The staff in **Germany**'s central behavioural science team are funded by the Federal Chancellery, while ministries and authorities cover project costs. This approach ensures low barriers for ministries to initially access existing evidence from behavioural science. However funding, tendering, and contracting create some administrative burden for larger projects to create original evidence.

Türkiye's Ministry of Trade secured the funding of its first projects from partner countries and international organisations. The organisation's internal behavioural science team has the ongoing responsibility of seeking and arranging external funding opportunities.

Assessing Governance principles

Governments may be interested in how they, or an external reviewer, could assess their implementation of these principles. The table below outlines questions to ask to understand the extent to which a country or public organisation has effective governance arrangements to embed behavioural science in policy making.

Table 6.1. Questions to assess Governance principles

How are those responsible for mainstreaming behavioural public policy held to account?
Who is responsible for promoting the adoption of behavioural science insights and methods?
What oversight or accountability mechanisms help ensure progress on mainstreaming behavioural public policy?
Is the performance of senior leaders assessed on their consideration of behavioural science evidence?
Are there regular reviews or structured exchanges among managers about the government's adoption of behavioural science?
How are resources mobilised to enable the use of behavioural science?
What resources are devoted to using behavioural science?
What is the source of resources for behavioural science, such as central government, line agencies, external bodies?
How are behavioural science resources spent, such as in-house staff, external partners, operational expenses?
Are the resources devoted to behavioural science diverse and agile enough to respond to a variety of policy areas and methodological approaches?
Are the resources devoted to behavioural science stable and secure over time?

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7 Integration

Behavioural science experts and policy makers can shape and influence the partners, stakeholders, and structures around them to produce a better enabling environment for behavioural public policy. **The principles in this section call for behavioural science to be embedded into standard processes and guidelines, for behavioural science activities to be conducted responsibly and openly to build citizens' trust, and for behavioural science experts to inform the development of data structures that enable more efficient and effective problem diagnosis and solution development.**

Why this matters

Many respondents to the OECD's surveys reported data-related difficulties, such as measuring the impact of interventions, getting access to broader outcome data, and conducting preliminary data gathering.

A second major cluster of challenges relates to how to inform and drive the policy process with behavioural science evidence. Many respondents reported struggles with finding the right partners, having their ideas implemented, having an impact at scale, and getting lessons to be adopted by others (see Principle 13 on knowledge brokerage).

A similar survey of behavioural science experts in the private sector reached similar conclusions: "the primary challenges that teams faced involved getting their interventions implemented in practice (42%) or measuring their impact (41%)" (Wendel, Newman and Khan, 2021[1]).

Table 7.1. Difficulties in implementing behavioural public policy

Survey respondents struggle with data, measurement, impact, and scaling

Age of team (years)	10+	5 to 9	Under 5	Total
Measuring the impact of your interventions	55%	37%	56%	48%
Getting those ideas or interventions implemented	64%	46%	47%	47%
Having an impact and scale results	55%	49%	36%	43%
Getting approval to run the intervention	55%	41%	36%	41%
Finding the right partners	55%	41%	36%	40%
Getting access to broader outcome data	18%	37%	39%	36%
Disseminating the lessons from your work or getting the lessons adopted by others	45%	29%	36%	34%
Conducting preliminary research / data gathering	45%	15%	25%	21%
Designing ideas or intervention	18%	20%	19%	19%
n=	11	41	36	103

Note: Where does your team struggle to be successful? Age not known for all respondents' teams.

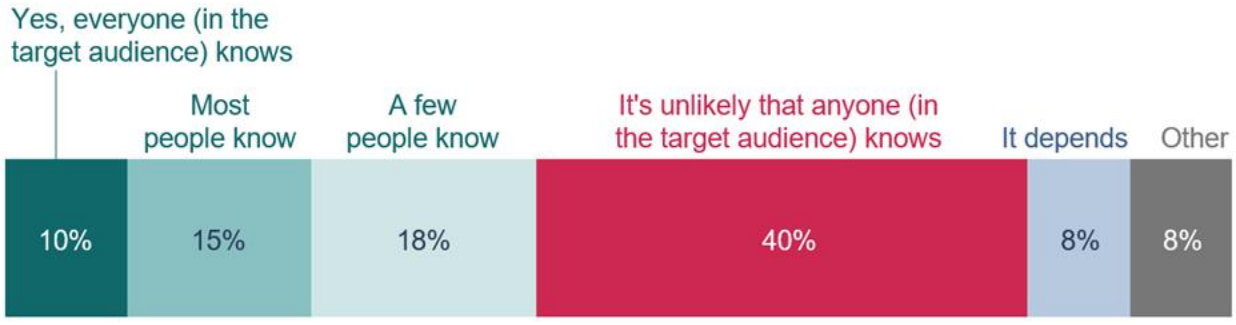
The most established teams (those ten or more years old) were more likely than newer teams to report challenges with implementation, scaling, dissemination, and approvals. These respondents may have

experienced more examples of their work not going as far as they had hoped, may be more critical of their own work, or may have higher expectations for what they want their work to achieve.

Few survey respondents were confident that citizens knew about their work. Only about a quarter said that most people in their target audience knew they were applying behavioural science techniques with them. Respondents may have answered this question as relating to research design: within a research activity it is often necessary to disguise, to some extent, the true nature of the research (such as the existence of different trial arms). These results may also suggest, however, a broader lack of understanding among citizens about their governments' use of behavioural science. Relatedly, only one third of respondents' teams publish their work externally (n=134; see Table 5.1).

Figure 7.1. Citizens' awareness of behavioural public policy

Few respondents believe their target audience knows about their government's use of behavioural science



Note: Does your audience (the people among whom you are seeking to change behaviour) know that you are applying behavioural science techniques with them? n=60

Good practice principles

8. Managers integrate behavioural science into standard guidelines and procedures for policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

Governments often have official processes, templates, and rules that policy makers should follow. Incorporating prompts and encouragements to consider behavioural science evidence into these standards can make it easier for policy makers to adopt a behavioural lens as part of their routine, business-as-usual practices, and to recognise situations where they might benefit from accessing behavioural science expertise (Hallsworth, 2023[2]). This kind of "structural integration" may help prevent a turn to behavioural science "from being 'washed out' after an initial period of enthusiasm" (OECD, 2020[3]). It may not be necessary to explicitly reference behavioural science; requirements to assess a policy's evidence base or its likely effects on stakeholders' behaviour may be sufficient to trigger a policy maker to seek behavioural science evidence.

Options for integrating behavioural science evidence into standard procedures sit on a spectrum of formality. Optional reminders – which may be easier to implement earlier in a government's journey of mainstreaming behavioural public policy – could include:

- Suggestions in guidelines for policy making
- Prompts in templates for policy proposals, briefings, or memoranda
- Opportunities for behavioural science experts to comment on proposals or briefings before they go to decision-makers.

More formally, policy makers could be required to take certain steps to demonstrate their consideration of behavioural science evidence. In the context of broader evidence-informed policy making, the OECD has suggested that soft exhortations to policy makers may not be sufficient to fully embed an evidence-informed approach (OECD, 2020[3]). Governments could consider formally legislating or regulating a requirement that policy makers design, implement, and evaluate policy on the basis of data and evidence (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[4]; OECD, 2020[3]; Keizer, Tiemeijer and Bovens, 2019[5]), as the OECD has suggested for regulatory impact assessment (OECD, 2020[6]). Such requirements – which may be more feasible once behavioural public policy is more established in the government or organisation – could include:

- Registering whether they have gathered behavioural science evidence when designing their policy, what they have done, or why they have not done it.
- Writing an assessment for decision-makers' consideration of how and why the proposed policy is expected to produce the desired behaviour change.
- Embedding behavioural science into existing impact analyses and *ex ante* evaluations of policy proposals, such as cost-benefit analyses and regulatory impact assessments (Gauri, 2018[7]). This integrated approach may be efficient, given that behavioural science evidence is often a corollary or complement to other forms of evidence; however, a more multi-faceted impact assessment is more complex and difficult to achieve in practice.
- Adding behavioural performance indicators into policy objectives, including in conditions for continued funding and management accountability frameworks

Structural requirements to consider behavioural science are likely to be most effective when paired with more positively framed and inspirational activities that motivate policy makers to see behavioural public policy as a way to achieve things they genuinely care about, such as better outcomes for citizens. Managers should be wary of incentivising and rewarding policy makers for completing procedural steps, rather than achieving policy outcomes. Misplaced incentives risk inadvertently encouraging the minimum necessary effort, rather than the full scope that may be most helpful.

Finally, reminders and requirements could be valuable throughout the policy cycle, including in:

Policy design. Prompts could be effective at getting policy makers to consider a behavioural lens early in the design process – increasing the likelihood of the policy ultimately being implemented (and evaluated) effectively and efficiently. An early prompt could potentially enable behavioural science experts to produce rigorous evidence in time for it to inform decisions and at a stage where serious changes can still be considered (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[8]). Procedures could also encourage policy makers to build this required time into workplans and project cycles where possible (WHO, 2023[9]).

Policy assessment. Managers could also consider mechanisms that enable behavioural science evidence to meaningfully inform policy decisions. Policy making practices and processes could emphasise and highlight behavioural science evidence for policy decision-makers, where this is relevant and appropriate.

Policy implementation. Implementing policies in an agile way, involving experimentation and tight feedback loops, creates opportunities for continuous learning, course corrections, and iteration (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[10]).

Monitoring and evaluation. Reviews and audits of policies offer another opportunity to incorporate a behavioural perspective (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[10]; Drummond, Shephard and Trnka, 2021[11]). Assessing the impact or effectiveness of a policy by focusing on the behaviours of the people involved can help to identify issues, explain outcomes, and generate ideas for program improvements.

Box 7.1. Examples of standard procedures

In the **Netherlands**, it is a mandatory quality requirement for policy makers to take into account citizens' capacity to act as intended. This requirement encourages the consideration and generation of behavioural science evidence. The Netherlands' regulatory impact assessment framework, known as the "Policy Compass", includes this requirement (OECD, 2020[12]). The government committed to the requirement in response to a 2017 report from the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy that advised the government to take a realistic approach on people's mental capacities when designing rules and institutions (Keizer, Tiemeijer and Bovens, 2019[5]). The "Policy Compass" includes a series of supporting questions to stimulate policy makers to consider a behavioural science approach, including questions about:

- *Process*, such as: Have preliminary tests been carried out among the public, for example using test panels, simulations or experiments? Did they involve all the relevant target groups and user profiles? Have other sources been consulted?
- *Content*, such as: What mental burdens does the scheme impose on people? Do small mistakes immediately have major consequences? Is an easy-to-access front office available for those who cannot manage?

At the European Commission, behavioural science has also been included in official guidelines "for preparing, implementing, and evaluating policies, measures, and financial programs" (Baggio et al., 2021[13]).

In **Canada**, a 2016 directive from the prime minister directed federal deputy heads to invest in experimentation, for example by apportioning a certain percentage of their program budgets to experimentation. This requirement leveraged existing platforms and reporting structures, and it was accompanied by support and training from central, in-house expert teams and an interdepartmental coordination mechanism for managers to discuss experimentation.

In **Israel**'s Ministry of Finance, behavioural science experts developed a work process aligned with the budget cycle. A 'wish list' of topics with potential for behavioural interventions was developed at the beginning of the cycle. Decision-makers then made "one comprehensive decision on which projects to pursue" based on cost-benefit analyses and the potential for implementation at scale (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[4]).

The **United Kingdom**'s Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office updated its internal rules, procedures and procurement processes – such as requests for proposal – to encourage the use of adaptive management and to build an organisational culture for learning and experimentation. This included providing support to upskill organisations without the necessary skills (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[14]).

Also in the United Kingdom, the central Government Communication Service (GCS) team has taken a number of steps to ensure the consistent use of behavioural science across major communications activities. The central GCS team is responsible for vetting all major campaigns as part of a centralised spending control process. Behavioural science experts within GCS are brought in to review all major behaviour change campaigns to provide advice to departments running the campaigns as well as to identify any development areas for behavioural science skills across government communications.

9. Managers ensure behavioural science is applied responsibly, openly, and with high integrity standards to build and maintain policy makers' and citizens' trust.

Behavioural science experts and policy makers need to produce and apply behavioural science evidence responsibly to ensure the safety, protection, and wellbeing of the public they serve (OECD, 2020[15]). Being sensitive, reflective, critical, and mindful of potential outcomes across societal groups at all stages of policy design can help behavioural science experts maintain high ethical standards. These standards help to build and maintain policy makers' and citizens' trust in applied behavioural science; and this trust is, in turn, a critical enabler of behavioural science work (Biddle, Gray and Hiscox, 2023[16]).

The OECD has established five main drivers of trust in government institutions: "the degree to which institutions are responsive and reliable in delivering policies and services, and act in line with the values of openness, integrity and fairness" (OECD, 2022[17]). For behavioural public policy, trust-building practices worth considering include acting transparently, operating with integrity, following ethics protocols, and adopting participatory research and design methods.

Transparency

Clear, broad, and inclusive communication, both within the government and outside it, can help ensure policy makers and citizens have an accurate understanding of how and why the government uses behavioural science insights and methods. For citizens, a broad understanding of how public and private organisations can use behavioural science to both facilitate and hinder people's goals can help explain why the government needs this capability (Sanders et al., 2021[18]). Transparency has many additional benefits, including:

- building trust that behavioural science is being done appropriately and in line with community expectations
- discouraging the symbolic or strategic use of only some pieces of evidence to support existing positions (OECD, 2021[19])
- enabling others to contest the evidence produced (OECD, 2020[20])
- promoting the impact and value of behavioural science; adding to the body of knowledge on the topic (Lecouturier et al., 2024[21])
- managing expectations of what behavioural science can achieve, thereby avoiding policy makers or citizens being frustrated by small effect sizes or null results
- encouraging the development of an external ecosystem of behavioural public policy, which can support the work done inside government.

Behavioural science experts can consider making the evidence they generate publicly available, regardless of method, effectiveness, or political convenience. This could include academic papers or reports on government websites. Some behavioural science teams have opted to release annual reports or tother aggregated publications of results to streamline the publication process and frame results in a broader strategic narrative. In doing so, behavioural science experts can also consider making their work and findings accessible to a diverse public audience that differs along dimensions such as disability and culture.

Some behavioural science activities may need to stay confidential in the short-term. On certain topics and at certain points in policy development, operating confidentially may be appropriate and necessary within the government's standard policy making conventions (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[22]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[21]). Furthermore, channels for informal advice and conversations with policy makers should be encouraged. But as a general principle, a government's use of behavioural science is likely to be more resilient and sustainable if it is transparent about these methods, given the likely improvements in reputation and citizen trust ((World Health Organisation, 2024[23])).

Beyond publication of research activities and findings, mechanisms of public communication about behavioural public policy more broadly could include references to behavioural science activities in standard government documents (such as white papers, consultation papers, or strategies), participation by in-house experts in public events (such as conferences or panels), and contributions to public debates (through articles, blog posts, podcasts, and so on).

Integrity

The behavioural science contribution to a policy process should stay true to the evidence and not be distorted or abbreviated to support any particular stakeholder's position (OECD, 2020[20]). Behavioural science advice should be robust, credible, and reliable, even though the ultimate policy decision will be made based on various inputs and types of evidence.

One way to safeguard the credibility of behavioural science and avoid "policy capture" is through "functional autonomy" (OECD, 2022[24]): separating the individuals providing behavioural science evidence from the policy makers. Such separation could have the downside, however, of reducing the direct interpersonal relationships that can facilitate knowledge brokerage (see Principle 13). As a result, "the right balance must be reached between the extremes of isolation and dependence" (OECD, 2020[20]).

Processes can help to achieve this balance: "both the processes used to select and analyse the evidence, but also the processes through which the advice is then provided to policy making" (OECD, 2020[20]). For example, behavioural science experts or knowledge brokers could be required to: record their advice and positions separately from other policy documents; use rubrics to convey the strengths and limitations of the evidence; or consider and declare conflicts of interest.

Ultimately, managers need to create a working environment that supports and encourages behavioural science experts to stay true to the data they collect and be honest brokers of the broader literature. Managers can do this by welcoming dissenting views, querying the evidence base behind a policy proposal, and being flexible with how the performance of in-house experts and knowledge brokers is judged.

Ethics protocols

Behavioural science's emphasis on environmental and non-conscious factors demands a unique commitment from policy makers to using these insights and methods responsibly. Citizens may be unaware of how some factors influence their choices, and governments need to be cautious when leveraging these factors to ensure individuals' long-term interests are respected and promoted, alongside those of the broader community.

Early in a government or organisation's adoption of behavioural science it can be convenient to rely on existing legislative, risk management, and ethical frameworks (OECD, 2017[25]). But the unique considerations prompted by behavioural science within the public sector may put staff in situations where they must intuitively determine when particular activities or applications are appropriate or not.

Over time, managers can enable experts and policy makers to develop tailored mechanisms and processes that guide staff through the particular ethical considerations of the behavioural science activities used within their organisation. Clear and transparent guidelines help maintain a consistent standard of ethical conduct. Promoting these guidelines externally can help build citizens' and stakeholders' trust in behavioural public policy. Tailored protocols could draw on the OECD's *Good Practice Principles for the Ethical Use of Behavioural Science in Public Policy* (OECD, 2022[26]), which includes practical tools and steps to help experts and policy makers reflect on ethical considerations that commonly arise at each stage of the policy process.

Where possible, managers can consider enabling behavioural science experts to refer projects and research activities to independent ethics review boards that understand applied behavioural science. Independent ethics review helps to de-risk behavioural public policy by prompting experts to examine their

work in a structured way and identify ethical issues that may not be immediately obvious, and giving them access to critical supports when making difficult ethical judgements.

Participatory methods

The OECD has noted that engaging citizens and stakeholders more richly and comprehensively in the policy making process can have both instrumental benefits (better results because policy makers make more informed decisions) and intrinsic benefits (strengthening representative democracy, building trust in government, and creating social cohesion) (OECD, 2016[27]). In its recommendation on open government, the OECD has called on member countries to "grant all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities to be informed and consulted and actively engage them in all phases of the policy-cycle and service design and delivery", and to "promote innovative ways to effectively engage with stakeholders to source ideas and co-create solutions" (OECD, 2017[28]).

In the context of behavioural public policy, "experts and policy makers need to engage with the community to explain the benefits, and to learn from community concerns" (Biddle, Gray and Hiscox, 2023[16]). Feedback loops between policy makers and the public on the implications of behavioural public policy could help the government ensure it is acting in line with community expectations. Being open and inclusive can include engaging transparently and honestly with citizens and stakeholders about: the use of behavioural science to understand problems; the design of policy interventions informed by behavioural science; the selection of evaluation criteria; and the use of behavioural science by government in general.

Behavioural science experts can consider adopting participatory methods to better understand the context they are designing for, help build trust in their work, and produce more sustainable outcomes. Many practitioners and observers of behavioural public policy have noted that "involving people as full participants, rather than test subjects, into the framing and design of solutions will result in … more contextually valid, transparent, and legitimate solutions" that are more likely to be impactful across contexts and over time (Schmidt and Stenger, 2021[29]). The WHO's technical advisory group on behavioural and cultural insights has called on behavioural science experts to "use a participatory approach to co-design tailored strategies and interventions with communities who will be affected", noting that engagement early in the design process can help build trust, especially among marginalised populations (WHO, 2021[30]). A full adoption of co-design approaches may entail quite different ways of working for behavioural science experts in government (Einfeld and Blomkamp, 2021[31]). At a minimum, qualitative research could be used to better understand actors' own understandings of their goals and constraints; at a maximum, behavioural science experts could approach their role in public policy less as central architects and more as "facilitators, brokers, and partnership builders" of a broader system of people seeking positive societal change (Hallsworth, 2023[2]).

Behavioural science experts can also consider testing policy interventions that engage citizens more actively in reflecting on and constructing their own choice environments. Example approaches include 'nudge plus', in which the existence of a behavioural intervention is brought to the citizen's attention (John and Stoker, 2019[32]), and 'self-nudging', in which citizens are empowered to make their own changes to their context that might help them achieve their goals (Reijula and Hetwig, 2020[33]). These approaches have the potential to spark a conversation between "citizens, public officials, and experts" about behavioural public policy that "acknowledges the democratic foundation of public policies and the autonomy this should entail" (John and Stoker, 2019[32]).

Box 7.2. Examples of trust building

In the **United States**, the central dedicated team working on evaluation and behavioural science publishes all of its evaluation results. It has also committed to publishing all pre-analysis plans (Linos, 2023[34]). More broadly, the 2021 presidential memorandum on "Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking" called on all agencies to appoint a government official as lead "Scientific Integrity Official" to implement and iteratively improve policies and processes to ensure integrity in the agency's use of evidence (Office of the President of the United States, 2021[35]).

In the **Netherlands**, in-house behavioural scientists in the national government publish results of their behavioural diagnoses and *ex ante* policy evaluations on their network's website. The network also submits reports to parliament every two years about behavioural public policy. When the ethical aspects of particular behavioural interventions call for special caution, these are discussed in parliament; for example, the Dutch parliament discussed the country's change from an opt-in to opt-out system for organ donation. This transparent discussion probably influenced citizens' behaviour in reaction to the change (Krijnen, Tannenbaum and Fox, 2017[36]).

At the **Norwegian** Tax Administration, all analysis and behavioural science projects must go through a legal process that assesses the goal of the study, how taxpayers' rights might be affected, how data will be used, and how taxpayers' privacy will be maintained.

In **Australia**'s central behavioural science team in the federal government, all research activities are assessed according to Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. This usually entails seeking independent ethics review of each project from a human research ethics committee. This longstanding process has helped build credibility when parliament has scrutinised the use of behavioural science insights and methods.

The behavioural science team in the **Slovak Republic**'s Ministry of Health works openly to develop comprehensive policy solutions by gathering ideas and opinions from the target group, testing options, sharing results, and seeking feedback. The team begins projects with an extensive study of behavioural barriers and motivations, which they publish publicly. They then present each step of their projects on social media. This way of working gives stakeholders the chance to see how their input shapes how policies are designed and implemented.

10. Managers support processes and structures for data collection and analysis that make it easier to diagnose behavioural issues and evaluate policy options.

Behavioural science experts rely on data about people's behaviour to identify the drivers of policy problems and measure the effectiveness of interventions. This work requires investments in data governance, including the skills, rules, and infrastructure for collecting and managing data about behaviours (and the drivers and barriers of those behaviours). This data collection and analysis would be most impactful if the broader public administration embraced a culture of experimenting, learning, and adapting.

The OECD has published comprehensive guidance on how governments can become more data-driven (OECD, 2019[37]) and make effective data governance policies (OECD, 2022[38]). This guidance calls for governments to recognise data as a key strategic asset that should be managed, shared, and re-used openly to transform the design, delivery, and monitoring of public policies and services (OECD, 2019[37]), while recognising the tension between the benefits of open data and individuals' and organisations' rights to control their own data (OECD, 2022[38]). Data governance therefore requires a clear data strategy to be implemented coherently with the support of rules, guidelines, and standards, as well as the enabling

architecture and infrastructure to readily generate, collect, store, process, share, and use data (OECD, 2019[37]).

Behavioural public policy, in common with broader approaches to evidence-informed policy making, relies on "the availability of high quality, timely, accessible, disaggregated, and re-usable results, performance, and administrative data" (OECD, 2022[24]), which in turn relies on basic infrastructure and systems for collecting and managing data about policy issues and programs (OECD, 2020[3]). For example, behavioural science experts may need data that enables a population of interest to be identified, put into meaningful subgroups, randomised, and contacted. Designing, implementing, and testing behavioural interventions is significantly more complex and costly without an existing data structure or measurement process, because it is time and resource-intensive for behavioural science experts to begin and manage their own bespoke data consolidation or collection activities (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[22]).

Governments can consider expanding on the administrative and statistical data they routinely collect to include measures of behaviour (and the drivers and barriers of that behaviour). Richer routine collection would facilitate problem diagnoses, evaluations grounded in actual behavioural outcomes, and adjustments to ongoing programs if behaviours are not changing as expected. There will remain a need, however, for additional in-depth data collection to understand specific issues or design tailored solutions. Specific data activities and infrastructure that could facilitate behavioural public policy include:

- agreements with implementation partners to facilitate rapid data collection (WHO, 2023[9])
- centralised data assets that link individuals or organisations across administrative datasets
- regular surveys of representative samples of citizens
- online experimental platforms
- standing pools of research participants
- partnerships between in-house behavioural science and data science experts
- standardized policies and practices that enable data collection
- partnerships with statistical agencies to continuously monitor behaviours.

These and other mechanisms can speed up data collection and reduce the cost of experimentation (Feng, Kim and Soman, 2021[10]), making behavioural public policy easier.

Building and expanding data infrastructure is costly. The OECD has noted that "substantial investments are often required" to generate, collect, share, re-use, clean, and curate data, and in many cases "complementary investments are also needed in data-related skills and competencies, as well as in information communication technologies" (OECD, 2022[38]). Governments and organisations early in the journey of mainstreaming behavioural public policy could begin by auditing what data they have available, collecting bespoke datasets for particular projects, and partnering with external research providers.

Regardless of maturity and investment, behavioural science experts' and policy makers' use of data would be more effective and efficient within a learning culture: an organisation that values seeking, sharing, and attending to data to inform operations and decisions (Jakobsen et al., 2019[39]; Lowe et al., n.d.[40]). Leaders can help set a culture of curiosity, experimentation, and adaptation by recognising and rewarding policy makers who seek and attend to data. Managers can also build processes and mechanisms to promote a data-driven approach, such as "routines and practices to transfer knowledge internally" (Linos, 2023[34]).

Box 7.3. Examples of data structures

The **Norwegian** Tax Administration has built a platform that enables in-house behavioural science experts to implement nudges and digital prompts in real time while taxpayers are filing their tax declarations. This platform has made it easier to implement and evaluate behaviourally informed interventions. The behavioural science team in the **Slovak Republic**'s Ministry of Health is also seeking to establish a central platform or testing centre to conduct pilot projects.

The European Commission has also built "its own platform to run online experiments independently, without resorting to external providers", thereby giving in-house behavioural science experts more flexibility and control over data collection (Baggio et al., 2021[13]).

Canada established a longitudinal survey of citizens' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours in the COVID-19 context in April 2020. This standing data collection process facilitated additional studies, such as Canada's collaboration with France and the OECD on effective interventions to reduce the spread of misinformation (OECD, 2022[41]). This data collection approach was then adapted to support behavioural science research in other policy areas, such as climate action and environmental protection, in late 2021.

In the **Netherlands**, a behavioural science unit at the Public Health Institute (RIVM) has focused on building data infrastructures to produce behavioural knowledge relevant to pandemic and crisis decision-making. The unit was established to support COVID-19 policy by developing, sharing and translating knowledge derived from behavioural science into advice and focal points for public health policy and communication. Different forms of research have been conducted, including surveys, interviews, literature reviews, scenarios, and intervention studies. Frequent data collection was established during the pandemic to monitor public perception of and adherence to the behavioural measures and recommendations, their impact on personal well-being and trust, as well as perceived justice and factors influencing vaccination uptake. The behavioural knowledge has been used to advise policy at the national, regional, and municipal level.

In **Israel**'s Ministry of Finance, the dedicated behavioural science team invested in setting up infrastructure for data collection and analysis within a particular policy topic, significantly increasing the understanding of behavioural biases at play. Although this high investment was prompted by one project, the framework that was created went on to be "used as a live database for several experiments" (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[4]).

Assessing Integration principles

Governments may be interested in how they, or an external reviewer, could assess their implementation of these principles. The table below outlines questions to ask to understand the extent to which a country or public organisation has integrated behavioural science into broader policy making practices.

Table 7.2. Questions to assess Integration principles

How is behavioural science incorporated into standard policy making procedures and guidelines?
To what extent do standard policy making procedures and frameworks encourage policy makers to adopt a behavioural science lens?
Are there formal standards or official requirements that make it obligatory for policy makers to consider behavioural science evidence?
Is behavioural science embedded in relevant procedures at all stages of policy development, implementation, and evaluation?
Do policy makers regularly cite behavioural science evidence when making formal arguments and proposals for policy options?
What are the consequences for policy makers for not considering behavioural science evidence?
Are managers or senior leaders required to communicate or report on their generation and use of behavioural science evidence?
How is the government or organisation ensuring the responsible and open use of behavioural science?
How well informed is the public discussion about the government's use of behavioural science?
How transparent is the government about how it embeds behavioural science insights and methods into policy making?
How much of the behavioural science work conducted to inform policy decisions is available to the public?
What mechanisms are in place to ensure the integrity of the behavioural science evidence, methods, and experts that inform policy making?
What guidelines and procedures are in place to ensure ethical conduct in the production and application of behavioural science evidence?
How are stakeholders, citizens, and marginalised groups involved in the production and application of behavioural science evidence?
How are data structures built and managed to enable behavioural diagnosis and testing?
How easy is it for behavioural science experts to access the administrative and behavioural data they need to produce policy-relevant evidence?
How do behavioural science experts leverage existing data structures to assist in their work?
To what extent are behavioural science experts collaborating with the government's broader efforts to build data architecture and infrastructure to drive evidence-informed policy?

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8 Capability

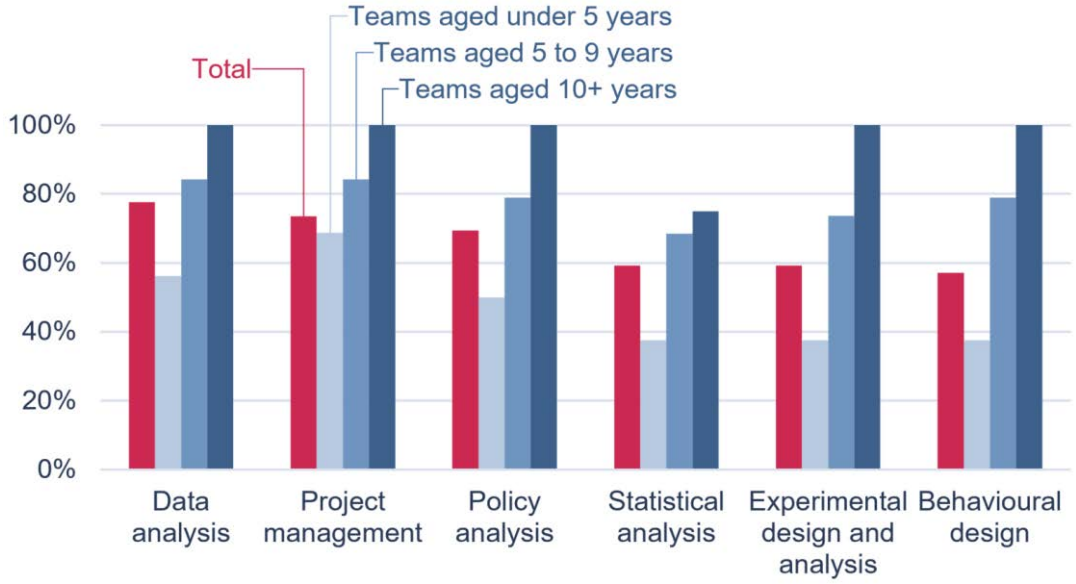
Behavioural science entails a complex body of knowledge and an array of evidence generation methods. The craft of policy making is similarly nuanced. Bringing behavioural science into policy making is therefore a difficult activity that requires a diverse range of skills. **The principles in this section call for policy makers to know when behavioural science might help and to have sustainable and ready access to behavioural science experts**. They also **call for mechanisms to bring behavioural science evidence into the policy process in a way that is relevant and useful, and to share knowledge and practices among practitioners.**

Why this matters

Respondents to the OECD's surveys report their teams having a variety of different skills. The most commonly reported skills were data analysis, project management, and policy analysis. We hear in our qualitative engagements with practitioners that this mix of research-related skills and government-related skills is critical to the effective integration of behavioural science evidence into the policy process.

Figure 8.1. Skills in government behavioural science teams

Common skills include data analysis, project management, and policy analysis



Note: What are the skills the members on your team possess? n=49 total (16 teams aged under 5, 19 teams aged 5 to 9, 4 teams aged 10+)

Survey respondents engage with a range of other partners. They most commonly partner with other government agencies, reflecting the interconnectedness of policy issues and the common involvement of multiple agencies in implementing research and policy. Non-government partners are also common, with

4 out of 5 respondents reporting they work with either consultants, academics, or international organisations. Teams of all sizes and ages engage with these external partners, with older teams appearing to be more likely to do so.

Table 8.1. Behavioural science experts' partners

Survey respondents partner within government and with external experts

Age of team (years)	10+	5 to 9	Under 5	Total
Other government agencies	75%	63%	73%	66%
Academics	100%	83%	40%	64%
External consultants (behavioural insights specialists)	75%	56%	47%	47%
International organisations	50%	44%	27%	38%
External consultants (such as major firms)	75%	11%	40%	30%
I do not work with others	0%	6%	0%	6%
n=	4	18	15	47

Note: Apart from your team, who do you work with and who else contributes to delivering behavioural science work? Age not known for all respondents' teams.

When we asked survey respondents why they worked with these external experts, the most common response was simply to increase the resources they have available to deliver work. This was particularly the case for using consultants. But external experts were also used for specialised skills, peer learning, and capacity building. The 3 in 10 respondents who turned to non-behaviourally-focused consultancies often did so to access specialised skills that their team did not have. Academics were approached for a range of reasons, while international organisations were most commonly seen as a source of peer learning (perhaps because these surveys were conducted through the OECD network of behavioural insights experts in government).

Table 8.2. How behavioural science experts use external partners

Survey respondents often use different external partners for different purposes

External partner	Academics	External consultants (behavioural insights specialists)	International organisations	External consultants (such as major firms)
Increase resources to deliver work	80%	86%	78%	86%
Peer learning	70%	77%	83%	57%
Specialised skills that my team does not have	57%	55%	61%	86%
Capacity building	50%	55%	61%	43%
n=	30	22	18	14

Note: What is the added value of working with this group?

While external partners are sometimes used for capacity building purposes, survey respondents often do this themselves. Almost 7 in 10 respondents reported that their teams delivered education and training (n=134, see Table 5.1).

Good practice principles

11. Managers build policy makers' capability to apply a behavioural science lens to their work.

Policy makers working on issues involving human behaviour should know how to look at those issues from a behavioural perspective, and when it would be useful for them to seek advice from behavioural science experts. These capabilities are part of the *policy advisory skills* and *commissioning skills* that the OECD has identified as necessary for a high performing civil service that creates public value (OECD, 2017[1]). Knowledge, skills, and confidence are necessary enablers of policy makers' uptake of behavioural science evidence (Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[3]).

Policy makers should adopt a behavioural science perspective wherever this is relevant, just as they should adopt an economic or legal perspective wherever it is appropriate and useful to do so. Policy makers can be familiar with general insights from the behavioural sciences, including that choices and behaviours are: underpinned by both conscious, reflective processes and non-conscious, automatic processes; influenced by social and cultural contexts; and encouraged or constrained by environmental factors (WHO, 2021[4]). Policy makers can also be familiar with research; research skills "have been found to be an enabler to evidence uptake" (Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]).

Box 8.1. Ways policy makers can apply a behavioural science lens

In a government or organisation that has mainstreamed behavioural public policy, policy makers working on topics that involve human behaviour would be able to:

- empathise with citizens or users and consider the varied experiences of different subgroups
- structure a problem in behavioural terms (such as breaking it down into component behaviours) and identify specific behaviours to change
- use tools and resources like templates, behavioural journey maps, decision aids, and simple frameworks such as EAST (BIT, 2014[6]) and COM-B (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011[7]) to suggest causes and possible solutions
- identify behavioural outcomes to measure the success of a solution
- seek evidence from systematic reviews
- seek ad hoc advice from behavioural science experts
- commission behavioural science expertise to contribute to decision-making
- commission stand-alone behavioural science research.

Source: Authors' elaboration of (West and Gould, 2022[8])

Policy makers can also recognise the threshold when they need additional behavioural science expertise to help them understand a problem or design and test a solution. Policy makers are experts in their policy topics and the craft of advising governments; it may not be feasible for them to become intimately familiar with behavioural science knowledge and research methods. The OECD has noted that policy makers would ideally have the "skills for understanding, obtaining, interrogating and assessing, using and applying evidence" (OECD, 2020[9]), but even these activities are difficult for policy makers operating under resources and time constraints. Deciding whether to recommend a previously successful policy intervention, for example, involves identifying the mechanism behind why it worked, judging whether that would apply in the new context, potentially testing that judgement, and using that evidence to make the

case for intervention (Linos, 2023[10]). There are risks that policy makers only partially trained in behavioural science might incorrectly or inappropriately apply their limited knowledge or methods at each stage (Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]).

The threshold for when a policy maker might need expert support will differ across organisational and policy contexts. Policy makers may be able to analyse problems and diagnose behavioural barriers, then involve behavioural science experts when trying to design and test potential policy solutions (OECD, 2019[11]). Behavioural science experts can help tailor promising solutions to the context and rigorously test them before final decisions are made. But the threshold for approaching experts may come even earlier in the policy process if the issue is unusual or complex, or if existing literature is sparse or poorly synthesised.

Attempts to build policy makers' capability in behavioural science can start with broad awareness raising, paired with inspirational and motivational messages about the value of the approach. Policy makers' interest in and understanding of behavioural science can drive its use, but their social environment is also critically important (Moffat, Cook and Chater, 2022[12]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]). It can be helpful for an organisation's staff to share a "common vocabulary" about behavioural science (Baggio et al., 2021[13]).

Practical skills and competences will be more likely to be applied in policy makers' day-to-day practice if they are excited about the potential of a behavioural lens to improve outcomes they care about. Training and promotional communications can share inspiring case studies, inform about strategic directives and requirements, establish emerging social norms, and encourage peer comparisons. Educational activities can be conducted by in-house behavioural science experts or external partners; governments can also work with educational institutions to ensure a behavioural lens is embedded into public administration courses (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]).Training and communications will be more effective if messages and lessons are tailored for particular audiences. Policy makers might need practical tools to help them adopt a behavioural science lens day-to-day; managers who are responsible for particular policy topics or deliverables might need convincing that behavioural science can be readily integrated into their areas with great effect. Regardless of the audience, capability building activities should always discuss the responsible and ethical application of behavioural science insights and methods (OECD, 2022[15]) (see Principle 9).

Mechanisms for capability building include training courses, written resources (such as handbooks), accessible tools (such as guidelines, checklists, or diagnostic aids), events (such as showcases of recent projects), informal communications (such as newsletters), project-based collaborations with experts (United Nations, 2021[16]; Moffat, Cook and Chater, 2022[12]), and requiring research skills when recruiting new staff (Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]). It may be effective to focus on building the capability of whole teams to adopt a behavioural approach, rather than – or in addition to – training isolated policy makers dispersed throughout the government. Organisations may benefit from creating their own "learning and competencies strategy" (Shaxson, 2019[17]) that reflects their context and their maturity in mainstreaming behavioural public policy.

Box 8.2. Examples of broad capability building

In the **United Kingdom**, the Government Communication Service's (GCS) Behavioural Science Team, based in the Cabinet Office, specialises in building behavioural science capability across UK government communications professionals. The team has published a series of guides for how to apply behavioural science to a range of topics, including crisis communications, mis/disinformation, the design of behaviour change campaigns, as well as how to screen behavioural interventions for negative unintended consequences. The guides are aimed at non-experts with the goal of empowering civil servants across government to use behavioural science in their day to day jobs. To help boost adoption of the skills these guides promote, the team has delivered hundreds of training workshops across

government in the use of behavioural science in both policy and communications for topics of priority importance to the UK Prime Minister. Most recently, the central GCS team has launched an introductory e-learning course on the principles of behaviour change communications which is available to all staff in any department with a communications role.

In **France**, the dedicated team of behavioural science experts at the centre of government has collaborated with major French universities to build a pipeline of future policy makers with relevant behavioural science skills.

In Rotterdam in the **Netherlands**, a dedicated behavioural science team showcased the policy makers they partnered with on projects as "learners, rather than clients or informants for intervention development". They treat collaborations as learning experiences that build policy makers' capability to "apply behavioural insights independently" (Dewies et al., 2022[18]).

In British Columbia, **Canada**, the dedicated behavioural science team has moved towards seeing policy makers as partners rather than clients. As part of their mandate, the unit engages, educates, and co-develops solutions with policy makers throughout the process. The team also:

- Has collaborated with a local university and behavioural science partners to develop and support a behavioural science practitioner program, the cost of which can be covered for internal policy makers through a central grant program.
- Runs internal courses at different levels that aim to increase awareness of and knowledge of behavioural science (such as monthly introductions and a five-day advanced course).
- Holds open office hours to allow policy makers to meet the team and ask questions.

In **Türkiye**'s Ministry of Trade, behavioural science experts have focused on enhancing the visibility of behavioural science in the policy system and fostering communication between policy makers. They organised the country's first behavioural public policy conference with more than 300 participants from various public institutions to discuss principles and use cases. They also drafted a book that covers relevant theory, the story of how they started applying behavioural science, and many use cases from different sectors and countries. They used the conference and book as platforms to engage with senior leaders and connect with policy makers across the government. The team also organised bootcamps on behavioural science with students in four local universities, and joined live radio and television programs.

In the **Netherlands**' national government, in-house behavioural scientists organise an annual 'Day of Behaviour' where policy makers from central, regional and local government, researchers from academia, and behavioural consultancy companies can attend lectures and workshops on the application of behavioural insights in policy. Over the last seven years the 'Day of Behaviour' has grown into a well-known event with more than 700 participants. Internal courses are also run throughout the year.

The Behavioural Economics Team of the **Australian** Government (BETA) has capability building as part of its mission statement. They have developed online courses for understanding and applying behavioural insights to public policy and running behavioural science projects. They also developed an online 'Behaviour Discovery Tool' to help policy makers unpack their policy issue from a behavioural perspective. Recently, the team started offering mentoring to support policy making teams undertake their own behavioural science projects.

At an agency level, the dedicated behavioural science function in **Australia**'s independent financial regulator ASIC has developed a set of internal resources to assist policy makers in adopting a behavioural lens, coupled with advice from ASIC's behavioural science experts. They have also

conducted regular roadshows to show policy making teams what value behavioural science can bring to their current priorities.

In the **Norwegian** Tax Administration, a dedicated behavioural science team has contributed to an online course about behavioural science and impact evaluations targeted at leaders and other policy makers.

12. Managers develop sustainable ways for policy makers to access behavioural science expertise.

Policy makers do not have the time, skills, or operating context to effectively and efficiently conduct and manage all the behavioural science evidence generation they need to inform their work. Policy makers therefore need access to behavioural science expertise, in a way that is tailored to their operating environment and that can adapt to their dynamic needs. This involves getting access to behavioural science experts (this Principle) and having that expertise translated to be useful in the policy process (Principle 13 on knowledge brokerage).

Accessing behavioural science experts who are separate people to policy makers is primarily a practical necessity. Behavioural science entails a complex and ever-changing body of knowledge, as well as a wide spectrum of evidence generation methods. Policy makers have their own expertise and cannot be expected to master behavioural science as well. Having accessible experts with some degree of autonomy can also be beneficial to policy making by enabling the "possibility of opposition" (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[19]): helping counter the potential for groupthink and confirmation bias among policy makers by giving discrete experts space to experiment and to challenge widely held assumptions (OECD, 2019[20]).

Synthesising and generating relevant and reliable behavioural science evidence requires a diverse mix of skills, including social research methods, data analysis, project management, and behavioural intervention design (Barrows et al., 2018[21]). Skills in communications, graphic design, evaluation, design thinking, systems thinking, digital technology, and many others can also help achieve meaningful and sustainable impact, depending on the activities being undertaken. This diversity means that behavioural science experts working on public policy almost always need to work in multi-disciplinary teams (OECD, 2019[11]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]). Expert teams also benefit greatly from having some policy making experience and expertise (Soon, 2017[22]).

At an early stage of behavioural science maturity, it can be pragmatic and effective to source expertise from outside the government (Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]). But many governments have experienced various positive impacts of developing in-house expertise, where they have the resources to do so. Being inside the organisation enables experts to build long-term relationships with policy makers, find an effective way of working within the organisation's unique operating environment, develop a body of knowledge over time, get involved early in the policy process, focus on iteration and continuous improvement, provide ad hoc advice, and adapt to emerging priorities (Jonkers and Tiemeijer, 2015[19]; Barrows et al., 2018[21]; Byrne-Davis et al., 2022[23]). Even governments that are very well advanced in mainstreaming behavioural public policy will benefit from outsourcing work occasionally and seeking input from external advisors; internal experts can help ensure this is done effectively (Baggio et al., 2021[13]).

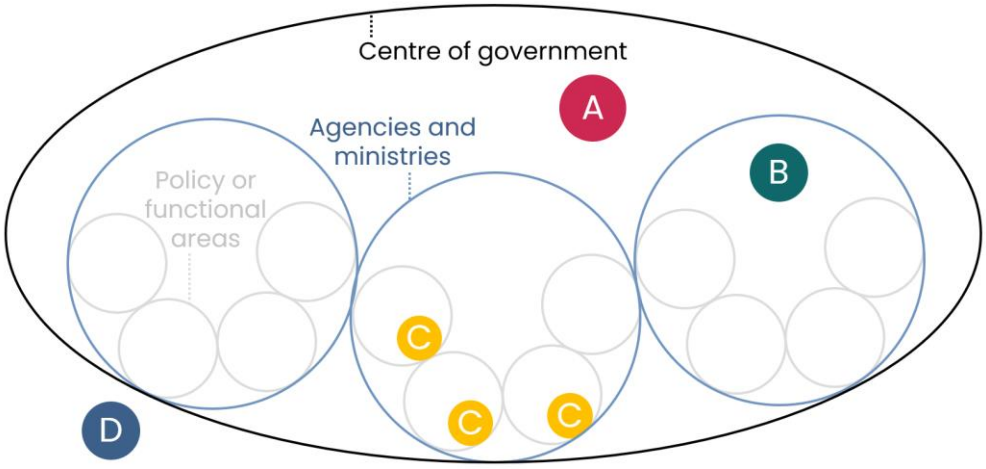
In-house expertise can be built in various ways, starting with directly recruiting new expert staff (United Nations, 2021[16]). Alternatively, managers can develop existing staff members (such as policy makers or staff working in related research and analysis functions) through training, collaborations with external partners, mentors and advisors, and interactions with networks of behavioural science practitioners (such as those convened by the OECD and the World Health Organization) (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[24]). A scan of the organisation may reveal pockets of expertise that already exist (WHO, 2023[25]). More creative resourcing strategies can include embedding visiting scholars in the organisation (United

Nations, 2021[16]; Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]) or establishing flexible work arrangements that enable staff in other areas to devote some of their time and experience to behavioural science activities (Dewies et al., 2023[26]).

Options for where to locate behavioural science expertise are summarised in the figure below. The following sections discuss these options in more detail. Governments can consider which option – or combination of options – would be most effective within their particular institutional context. A clear vision (Principle 3) and oversight (Principle 6) can help coordinate expertise located in various places in the policy system (OECD, 2020[27]).

Figure 8.2. Possible locations for behavioural science expertise in government

Managers can enable policy makers to access behavioural science experts internally or externally



Note: (A) Experts grouped as a dedicated team in a central government agency; (B) Experts grouped as a dedicated team for a specific organisation; (C) Experts dispersed throughout organisations in particular policy or functional areas; (D) Expertise accessed from outside government.

Dedicated teams

Dedicated teams (options A and B in Figure 8.1) – often referred to 'behavioural insights teams' (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[28]) – can effectively co-locate the mix of skills necessary to do rigorous and reliable behavioural science work (Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]). They can be particularly useful at the early stages of behavioural science adoption, as they can provide experts space and time to develop practices and ways of working that are effective in the unique context of the government or organisation.

Dedicated teams benefit from having clear mandates and responsibilities, such as the scope of policy topics they work on, the stages of the policy process they are involved in, and how specific project work is balanced with broader efforts to mainstream behavioural public policy throughout the government or organisation. Some teams are mandated to integrate behavioural science with other policy making perspectives, such as human-centred design or systems thinking. This integrated approach can help the team offer a comprehensive problem analysis and solution design offer to policy makers, while being careful to maintain the unique perspective, theoretical lens, and methodological rigour that characterise behavioural science (OECD, 2019[11]; Ewert, 2019[29]; Frame, Milfont and More, 2023[30]).

The choice of where to place a dedicated team can be made with consideration to the institutional context and the government's strategy (see Principle 3). Ideally, a dedicated team would be located somewhere where it has access to diverse evidence users, authority to take responsible risks and secure cooperation, and agility to think quickly and try new things (Barrows et al., 2018[21]). The choice of location almost

inevitably shapes the kind of work the team takes on and the kind of impact it can have (World Health Organisation, 2024[31])). For example:

- Placing a dedicated behavioural science team in a central government agency or cross-cutting function within an organisation can signal the importance of behavioural science, increase opportunities for experts to influence senior decision-makers, and facilitate coordination across agencies and levels of government.
- Teams situated in strategy or policy areas may find opportunities to provide rapid and responsive input into policy decisions.
- Teams in science or research areas may have more space to do rigorous but time-consuming work.
- Teams in transformation or innovation areas may be able to contribute to structural and systems changes.
- A dedicated team could be placed within one particular policy area identified as a priority for behavioural science. At least in a dedicated team's early stages, putting bounds around its work in this way could boost behavioural science experts' visibility to particular policy makers and managers, help them to contribute to policy design processes, demonstrate the value of behavioural science, enable a more sustained focus on particular issues, and build the capability of a particular set of policy makers.

A larger, more mature team will probably be more effective if its members bring diverse skills, backgrounds, and knowledge. Managers could consider pursuing a mix of specialisations within the team, across dimensions like:

- Academic disciplines (such as psychology, economics, anthropology, neuroscience, and so on)
- Research methods (qualitative and quantitative)
- Stages in the policy cycle (such as problem analysis, intervention design, or evaluation)
- Professional experiences inside and outside government organisations
- Lived experiences and diverse identities
- Policy topics.

Dedicated teams are unlikely to be sufficient to fully mainstream a behavioural approach across the policy system. If they lack influence with key stakeholders across the policy system, and are not effectively integrated into processes and decisions, they can struggle with getting their evidence and advice implemented in practice (DellaVigna, Kim and Linos, 2022[32]; Battersby, 2021[33]). A poorly managed strategy and mandate can sometimes lead to conflict with other functions or the impression that the dedicated team is pursuing its own agenda. A single team may struggle to sustain specialisations across a broad range of policy topics, types, and stages. Finally, a discrete team can also be at risk of being cut after organisational restructures or elections (Jones, Head and Ferguson, 2021[34]; Hallsworth, 2023[35]; Gandhi, 2021[36]).

Dispersed expertise

Instead of bringing experts together into a discrete team, another option is to disperse behavioural science experts throughout the policy areas and functions where they can be most useful (Option C in Figure 8.2). In this model, the government or organisation may have an overall behavioural science strategy, but individual experts are accountable to particular areas that are directly pursuing the government's strategic objectives (Gandhi, 2021[36]).

This option has the benefit of enabling a behavioural science perspective to be deeply integrated into the activities of particular areas. Dispersed experts could potentially offer value earlier in policy processes,

proactively identifying opportunities for the production and consideration of behavioural science evidence before the policy system converges on a preferred solution. Being integrated with the staff responsible for creating or delivering a policy may also make it more likely that behavioural science evidence will be adopted and implemented.

It may be difficult for isolated, dispersed experts to conduct the full range of behavioural science evidence synthesis and generation activities on their own, limiting the potential impact of behavioural science activities. Dispersed experts could be supported by external experts, or by colleagues in their host areas with complementary skills. Dispersed experts could also support each other through a network or community of practice (see Principle 14 on knowledge sharing) (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[24]).

Dispersed experts can coexist with a dedicated team. A dedicated team can act as a reference point for the experts working in particular policy areas or functions (Baggio et al., 2021[13]), providing shared structures, guidelines, and protocols. Such a mixed model could combine the influence and convening power of a central team with the specialisation, local access, and credibility of distributed staff. The dispersed experts could even be formally affiliated with both their host area and the central team, in a 'matrix' or 'satellite' model (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[24]). In this model, experts report to both a local manager and a dedicated behavioural science manager, enabling them to drive projects and build capacity in specific policy areas or government functions while also remaining connected to a dedicated team responsible for setting good practice, maintaining expertise, and driving behavioural public policy more broadly.

External partnerships

For a government or organisation turning to behavioural science for the first time, it can be effective to seek support from external experts, such as international organisations, academics, think tanks, not-for-profits, or consultancies. If resources allow, a plan can be developed for bringing that expertise in-house over time; external experts could start as direct practitioners but slowly transition to a coaching, mentoring, and train-the-trainer role (United Nations, 2022[37]). Alternatively, for some governments or organisations with limited human resources, strategic partnerships with these external bodies may offer a way to build sustainable access to behavioural science expertise even in the longer term, without needing to find or develop this in-house (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023[38]). Even governments or organisations with mature internal capabilities, however, can enable their internal experts to access external advice and support, which can expand their impact, address more priorities, and continue to drive upskilling (United Nations, 2021[16]; Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]).

Strategic partnerships with external experts could include formalised collaboration with universities or research institutes. Such collaboration enables internal experts to stay up to date with academic developments and produces opportunities for joint evidence generation activities that maintain high quality standards (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]). At a minimum, academics could be included on an organisation's technical advisory group (see Principle 6 on accountability).

Access to external expertise could also be facilitated by flexible procurement frameworks with private sector or academic providers. Selecting preferred providers fairly and transparently in advance (for example through umbrella agreements or non-binding contracts) means that policy makers can then procure quality services rapidly when they are operating within short policy windows (World Health Organisation, 2024[31]).

Box 8.3. Examples of accessing experts

In **Germany**, a dedicated team is located in the Federal Chancellery. This in-house team in the centre of government collaborates with a network of other behavioural science experts across federal ministries and academia (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[28]).

In **Canada**, while a dedicated behavioural science team is located in the Impact and Innovation Unit at the Privy Council Office, which sits at the centre of the federal government, the team also recruits, hires, trains, and supports a large cohort of Behavioural Science Fellows – individuals with technical skills and expertise in the application of behavioural science to public policy who are brought into the federal government of 12-24 month terms – in applying the science across multiple federal departments and agencies. This is accomplished by embedding fellows with various teams across the federal government. In addition to advancing behavioural science research projects in support of their host teams, fellows provide training in behavioural science and offer consultation on how behavioural insights could be applied to different areas across their host department or agency, as means of mainstreaming the science. In addition to the dedicated team at the Impact and Innovation Unit, there are now at least 15 departments and agencies that employ their own dedicated behavioural science teams or behavioural scientists on staff. Some teams are smaller (2-3 individuals), while others are larger (10+ individuals).

In the **Netherlands**, each ministry hires its own in-house behavioural science experts. A page on their shared network's website lists all the experts and their departments, making it easy for policy makers to find the right experts for their problem. The number of behavioural science experts differs per government organisation. In general, the number of experts is lower in the policy departments compared to implementation and supervisory agencies. Furthermore, given that most teams are small, behavioural consultancy companies are regularly hired to assist on well-defined research projects.

In **Australia's** independent financial regulator ASIC, behavioural science experts are located in an area focused on consumer policy and also serve as a resource across other parts of the organisation.

In Rotterdam's municipal government in the **Netherlands**, a dedicated team was created by bringing together policy makers and academics on part-time contracts. The team is jointly managed by a municipal project leader and an academic head (Dewies et al., 2022[18]). In the **United States**, the Office of Evaluation Sciences has brought on behavioural scientists seconded part-time or full-time from academic institutions and non-profit organisations to serve as project managers, technical advisors, and analysts. Standard processes and arrangements for these secondments are provided by the United States' Intergovernmental Personnel Act (Office of Evaluation Sciences, 2022[39]).

Türkiye's Ministry of Trade began adopting behavioural science by conducting a major project with a not-for-profit. It then signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Bank to enable collaboration with the Mind, Behavior and Development Unit (eMBeD). In the **United States** in 2010, the Department of Health and Human Services similarly began adopting behavioural science by conducting a large-scale demonstration project in collaboration with a non-profit social policy research organisation (Office of Planning, n.d.[40]). Further projects followed, as well as a grant program to support scholarly dissertations applying behavioural science lens to social policy.

In **France**, a small behavioural science team in the Interministerial directorate for public transformation (DITP) has longstanding contractual relationships with behavioural science consultancies. They have also recently established an interministerial *marché public*: an arrangement that enables other policy makers to directly access these consultancies' expertise with only minimal monitoring and quality checking from the central team. The World Health Organization has long-term arrangements with suppliers to facilitate timely access to external support and expertise (WHO, 2022[41]) , and the dedicated team in British Columbia, **Canada** is also looking at simplified procurement methods to augment their in-house resources and capacity.

13. Managers ensure that behavioural science evidence can be useful to inform policy making processes through quality brokerage.

It is rarely obvious how insights from the behavioural sciences can and should be used to inform policy decisions. Scientific findings, data, and analysis need to be repackaged to be useable by policy makers and decision-makers (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[28]). 'Useable' evidence is accessible, relevant, timely, salient, and actionable, and it appears legitimate and credible (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010[42]). The activity of introducing, moving around, translating, and recontextualising evidence to facilitate its consideration in the policy system is often referred to as 'knowledge brokerage' (Feitsma, 2018[43]). Brokerage ensures that policy makers have access to evidence that is appropriate to the policy concern, addresses multiple political considerations, and is useful to achieve policy goals (OECD, 2020[44]). In the process, knowledge brokers often step away from technocratic or purely scientific logics (Feitsma, 2018[43]; Hallsworth, 2023[35]), instead producing advice that is as accurate as possible within the "often messy reality of how actual policy-making occurs" (OECD, 2020[9]).

Discussions of evidence use in public policy often rely on the metaphor of two communities – researchers and policy makers – that speak different languages (Newman, 2020[45]). While this oversimplifies the diversity of roles that exist between academics and elected decision-makers, it remains a helpful metaphor, and one that resonates with the lived experience of many policy makers and behavioural science experts.

Many have noted the lack of strong empirical evidence for what strategies are effective at brokering knowledge between these two communities (Newman, 2020[45]; Breckon and Dodson, 2016[46]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]), with some even suggesting that "context-independent evidence for the intrinsic efficacy of knowledge exchange strategies" may be impossible (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010[42]). But the personal views and experiences of policy makers and behavioural science experts suggest some combination of skill development, dedicated roles, relationships, and communication channels.

It can be effective to **upskill** behavioural science experts in policy making practices, or to hire experienced policy makers into a dedicated behavioural science team. The skills required to make change in government include project management and interpersonal communication (Jones, Head and Ferguson, 2021[34]) (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]), as well as "navigating politics and power, operating with constrained resources and the pressure of public scrutiny, and generally being keyed-in to the needs and norms of your community" (Barrows et al., 2018[21]). Informing or encouraging policy change with evidence also relies on experts being able to identify and seize politically feasible opportunities for this to happen (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[28]; OECD, 2020[9]). Behavioural science experts may also need to upskill in the activities necessary to make their evidence, or plans to generate evidence via an experiment or other research activity, palatable within the values and processes of decision-makers; for example, they may need to conduct cost-benefit analyses of their recommendations or tailor experimental methods to the circumstances of a particular policy area.

Upskilling policy makers in the uses and relevance of behavioural science evidence can also facilitate knowledge brokerage, including by helping them identify opportunities to draw on or commission behavioural science early in the policy process (United Nations, 2021[16]; Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]) (see Principle 11 on policy makers' capability).

Another option is to invest in specific **individuals or teams** who are explicitly mandated to serve as knowledge brokers (Dewies et al., 2023[26]; Newman, 2020[45]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]; Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]). These boundary workers may work within government or in intermediary institutions like think tanks or clearing houses (Jacobzone and Picalarga, 2023[47]). Knowledge brokers help policy makers "parse through the evidence, weigh more rigorous studies more heavily, and consume the results of those studies in a manageable way" (Linos, 2023[10]). In-house behavioural science experts are often knowledge brokers as much as they are evidence producers (Feitsma, 2019[48]); the most common activity reported in the OECD's surveys was providing advice relying on existing evidence (see Table 5.1). Several OECD

countries mandate particular individuals, such as Chief Scientific Advisors, to identify policy makers' evidence needs and communicate evidence to them (OECD, 2015[49]).

Encouraging direct interpersonal **relationships** between experts and policy makers can also facilitate knowledge brokerage. Rich interactions between behavioural scientists and evidence users over sustained periods can enable productive projects; build genuine willingness to implement advice once delivered; ensure that advice is targeted, feasible, and scalable; and create allies to advocate for behavioural science throughout the public sector (Contandriopoulos et al., 2010[42]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]) (Lecouturier et al., 2024[5]). Senior leaders can help by encouraging policy teams to engage with behavioural science experts. Over time, trusting, productive, and collaborative partnerships – involving genuine investment from policy makers – can help drive evidence adoption and implementation (Newman, 2020[45]; Hallsworth, 2023[35]) (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]). For example, an evaluation of Rotterdam's dedicated in-house behavioural science team found the most common explanation for the team's advice being implemented was policy makers playing an active role in co-producing that advice (Dewies et al., 2023[26]).

Mechanisms for coordination and a broader culture of collaboration within the government or organisation may also help. High levels of connectedness, trust, and knowledge of others' work can facilitate the adoption of new ideas (Kumpf and Jhunjhunwala, 2023[50]). Policy systems are interdependent, with each component affecting the functioning of other components (Kaur et al., 2022[51]). Designing and implementing effective and feasible solutions therefore requires multiple policy areas, and multiple types of experts, to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Finally, **communication** between policy makers and behavioural science experts can be clarified, sped up, and facilitated in both directions:

Research results and practical guidance for policy makers can be communicated effectively in ways that are clear, succinct, and readily accessible (OECD, 2019[52]; Newman, 2020[45]) (Moffat, Cook and Chater, 2022[12]). This could involve a combination of compelling written materials and verbal engagements. Policy makers can consider explicitly requesting these knowledge dissemination and translation activities when commissioning behavioural science evidence from experts.

Integrating behavioural science in the policy process allows for regular and institutionalised brokerage of evidence between policy makers and behavioural science experts. (See Principle 8)

Publishing the results of behavioural science projects publicly can allow behavioural science research to be found during evidence scans conducted by policy makers. This in turn may result in policy makers proactively contacting behavioural science experts who have worked in a particular area for support (See Principle 9).

Policy makers can also be more explicit and active in sharing their evidence needs with behavioural science experts, for example through a formal plan or learning agenda. Mechanisms to inform behavioural science experts about upcoming priorities would enable them to do time-consuming primary research that "produces insight on the outcome that policymakers value" (Linos, 2023[10]). Several OECD countries require departments or agencies to annually consider their future evidence needs and share these in research or evidence plans. These evidence planning activities could similarly be conducted as part of developing specific strategies or white papers.

Box 8.4. Examples of knowledge brokerage

In British Columbia, **Canada**, the dedicated behavioural science team includes a mix of skill sets including scientists, policy specialists, and knowledge translation strategists. This mix enables them to ensure their interventions would be feasible to implement at scale, and that their advice is accessible to policy makers and the public.

In Rotterdam in the **Netherlands**, policy makers were recruited on a part-time basis into a dedicated behavioural science team to serve as 'policy domain advisors'. These advisors "stood in-between case proposers and researchers, mediating between them to integrate needs from research and policy" (Dewies et al., 2023[26]). Working part-time in their regular roles enabled them to maintain their networks and information channels.

In the **Netherlands**, two specific staff members have been allocated the task of encouraging in-house behavioural science experts to work together with policy makers. To help policy makers experience fewer barriers to include a behavioural science approach, they share best practices and enhance tools for the mandatory quality requirement to take into account citizens' capacity to act (see Principle 8 on standard procedures).

Israel's Ministry of Finance found it effective for policy makers to control collaborative projects, rather than the behavioural science experts. This approach helped identify and overcome obstacles to implementation because the policy makers had a better understanding of the dynamics of the real world (Shapsa Heiman and Israel, 2022[53]).

In the **United States**, the Office of Evaluation Sciences writes short summaries of their research findings for a policy audience. They have also experimentally tested how presenting evidence in different ways can influence the conclusions drawn by policy makers (OES, 2021[54]).

The **United Kingdom** offers policy training for academics, explaining how policy works in theory and in practice, and what tactics academics can use to influence the decision-making process (Open Innovation Team, 2023[55]).

14. Managers build mechanisms for dissemination and knowledge sharing, such as networks of behavioural science experts and supporters.

Enabling behavioural science experts and policy makers to share their knowledge can be an effective way to build and maintain a common level of capability across the policy system, ensure consistency of quality, and reduce duplication of effort (United Nations, 2021[16]). Useful knowledge can be explicit – such as actual behavioural science evidence or research findings – but also tacit – such as experienced practitioners' practical wisdom about effective ways to influence policy with evidence.

Networks or communities of practice enable members to make personal connections and contacts, and share to resources, lessons learned, and best practices (Byrne-Davis et al., 2022[23]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[3]). Networks can facilitate activities such as workshops, lectures, online platforms for asynchronous communication, and informal social engagements. Networks can also encourage the mobility of behavioural science experts between teams via temporary or permanent deployments, which can encourage knowledge sharing across the organisation. In some administrative cultures a network may be more sustainable and effective if it is formalised to some extent, such as by providing it with some allocated funding and official institutional arrangements. The European Commission's Communities of Practice Playbook provides useful guidance on how to design, govern, and manage productive communities that learn creatively together and deliver integrated policy work (Catana et al., 2021[56]).

A network's membership should reflect its intended purposes. A network could focus on improving experts' practice and knowledge; providing a safe space to troubleshoot common issues; breaking down silos across agencies or levels of government; or keeping a behavioural lens front of mind for policy makers. These different purposes may be best achieved through multiple networks operating hierarchically or in parallel. For example, all behavioural science enthusiasts could be connected in one network, with a subset of more experienced staff also engaging in an expert network for more focused discussions. The optimal balance is likely to depend on the government's size and maturity in adopting behavioural science.

In-house behavioural science experts or enthusiasts can also be encouraged to network with external experts, such as academics (OECD, 2019[11]; WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2023[57]). These connections help experts and policy makers stay informed about new research and can lead to fruitful collaborations (Barrows et al., 2018[21]). Multinational networks of behavioural science practitioners in government, such as those facilitated by the OECD and WHO, can also be useful for identifying best practices and generating ideas.

Managers could also consider establishing a shared repository of behavioural science work conducted across the government, either in conjunction with a network or separately (United Nations, 2021[16]; Jakobsen et al., 2019[2]; Curtis, Fulton and Brown, 2018[3]). This could serve as a knowledge base to guide and inspire behavioural science experts and policy makers with case studies and best practices relevant to their context (Aayush Agarwal, 2023[14]). Once a repository is well established, behavioural science experts could consider synthesising evidence across previous projects, where this would produce relevant and useful advice for policy makers.

Box 8.5. Examples of networks for knowledge sharing

The Behavioural Insights Network in the national government of the **Netherlands** (BIN NL) is a large and active network that coordinates and promotes the mainstreaming of behavioural public policy. Enthusiastic individual experts in various agencies begun meeting informally to share insights, advice, and tools, before the BIN NL was formally established in 2014 (Mukherjee and Giest, 2020[28]). It conducts regular meetings for in-house experts and an annual conference for policy makers; provides an online portal for in-house experts to engage with each other between meetings; runs its own public-facing website; collects experiences and lessons learned in publications and online decision tools; and publishes behavioural science projects and evidence from across the government (both regularly online and in a periodic publication) (Behavioural Insights Network Netherlands, 2021[58]). All ministries contribute funding, and these dedicated financial resources have enabled practitioners to broaden and deepen the impact of the network.

In **Australia**, the dedicated behavioural science team at the centre of the federal government chairs a practitioners' network (convening in-house experts across government organisations to share research, project examples, and best practices) and previously ran a champions' network (convening policy makers who had some degree of training in behavioural science insights and methods).

At an agency level in **Australia**, the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is establishing an internal Behavioural Science Enthusiasts Network open to all staff in the organisation. Based on similar initiatives in other departments, the network will publish a newsletter and run monthly events with presentations, guest speakers, and interactive sessions on particular policy topics. The network will focus on specific themes each month timed to be relevant to policy activities happening across the organisation at that time of year.

In **Canada**'s federal government, communities of practice bring together behavioural science experts working in specific domains; for example, the Government of Canada Behavioural Science Community of Practice invites leaders in behavioural science to speak at (virtual) events, holds showcases with

presentations of behavioural science studies led by individuals across the federal public service, and organises workshops on new behavioural science methods. In-house experts across the federal, provincial, and municipal levels also meet regularly at the leadership and staff levels to share experiences and opportunities.

In **Argentina**, behavioural science experts in government have established a common network with partners in academic institutions and research organisations to share knowledge and connect researchers with policy makers.

Some OECD countries have formalised professions as a way of grouping together public servants with similar roles. In the **United Kingdom** various analytical professions support evidence-informed policy making, including the Government Social Research Service, the Government Communication Service, and the Government Economic Service (OECD, 2020[9]). Although behavioural science hasn't been professionalised in the same way, the extensive network of behavioural scientists across UK government organisations comes together on a quarterly basis to share knowledge and expertise with the aim of upholding a high standard of behavioural science practice across the government.

Assessing Capability principles

Governments may be interested in how they, or an external reviewer, could assess their implementation of these principles. The table below outlines questions to ask to understand the extent to which a country or public organisation has the capability to embed behavioural science in policy making.

Table 8.3. Questions to assess Capability principles

How familiar are policy makers with when and how to use behavioural science insights and methods?
Do policy makers know how to analyse a problem from a behavioural perspective?
Are policy makers familiar with simple, readily applicable tools and frameworks that help them adopt a behavioural lens?
Do policy makers and managers understand when and how behavioural science can be useful for their policy making practice?
How is behavioural science incorporated into post-secondary education and professional development programs for policy makers?
How can policy makers access behavioural science expertise?
How are in-house behavioural science experts organised, structured, and managed?
How can behavioural science experts draw on the range of scientific and government-related skills necessary to produce relevant and impactful evidence?
Are policy makers familiar with what behavioural science expertise is available to them and how to access them?
How is behavioural science evidence made to be useful in the policy process?
Are there individuals or institutions with a mandate for brokering behavioural science evidence into the policy system?
How is behavioural science evidence disseminated to policy makers and decision makers?
Are findings and insights from behavioural science communicated clearly?
Is the behavioural science evidence that is sought or commissioned made applicable to policy decisions?
How is behavioural science knowledge and practice shared across the government or organisation?
How do in-house behavioural science experts exchange knowledge and experiences amongst themselves?
Do behavioural science experts across government have access to a shared portal or repository for sharing knowledge?
Can policy makers and behavioural science experts readily access examples of previous behavioural science work done in government?

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9 Maturity journeys and case studies

This report's good practice principles are relevant for all governments. They identify categories of activity that deserve attention regardless of policy topic, context, or the government's maturity in mainstreaming behavioural science. How these principles should be implemented in practice will, however, be dramatically different in different governments, and in different organisations within the same government – and these practices will also need to change over time. Practices that may be critical for establishing a position for behavioural science in the policy system may become irrelevant, or even detrimental, as the approach becomes part of business-as-usual.

Older teams tend to do more complex work

Governments and organisations are unlikely to mature at the same pace. We could assume, however, that those who began longer ago are more likely to be in a maturing phase. With that in mind, we can see a few differences in responses to the OECD's surveys between newer and more established teams (see box below). **In summary, older teams appear to apply more diverse skills and methods to a wider range of activities, drawing on richer external relationships and better data – but many still face challenges with translating their research and advice into policy impact.**

Box 9.1. Differences in survey responses between newer and older teams

Teams emphasise slightly different drivers of success as they age (see Table 4.1). Reflecting their emerging status, newer teams were relatively more focused on highlighting the advantages of behavioural science. Older teams were relatively more concerned about recruiting and retaining talent.

More established teams more commonly reported doing almost all of the activities we asked about, suggesting it takes time for organisations to establish necessary processes, relationships, and tools (see Table 5.1). Respondents working in older teams were particularly likely to say they provided advice on policy design, suggesting they are working earlier in the policy cycle. Older teams were more likely to say they conducted their own experiments (which can require advanced resources, skills, and contacts) but also to say they were evaluating behavioural impact in other ways, suggesting a pluralistic and pragmatic approach to research methods.

The most established teams (those ten or more years old) were more likely than newer teams to report challenges with implementing results, scaling interventions, disseminating findings, and getting approvals for work (see Table 7.1). These respondents may have experienced more examples of their work not going as far as they had hoped, may be more critical of their own work, or may have higher expectations for what they want their work to achieve. The only difficulty they reported less than newer teams was getting access to broader outcome data, suggesting that it can be effective to mature data management practices over time.

When asked about skills in their team, older teams were more likely to report having every skill we asked about, suggesting a more advanced and technical team (see Figure 8.1).

Older teams were also more likely to report partnering with academics, consultants, and international organisations, suggesting that it takes time to build these external relationships (see Table 8.1).

Good practices at different stages

Different practices will help governments and organisations navigate the changing considerations and risks they are likely to face over time. The table below takes the five dimensions of LOGIC and suggests practices that may be more relevant in the emerging, growing, and maturing phases (see Figure 2.2). This is not intended to be prescriptive. Every government and organisation will have different starting points, policy systems, and end goals, meaning every path to mainstreaming behavioural public policy will be unique and context-dependent.

Table 9.1. Implementing the LOGIC principles across phases in the mainstreaming journey

Example practices that may be useful at different points in the process of mainstreaming behavioural public policy

Phase	Leadership	Objectives	Governance	Integration	Capability
Emerging	Launch a new effort with a visible statement from senior leaders. Present case studies to senior leaders to make the case for dedicated resources.	Identify priority focus that lend themselves to a behavioural approach, considering the government's agenda and what has been successful elsewhere.	Allocate the mandate for driving the change management process to a person or team. Give a dedicated team of in-house experts an initial funding window. Seek resources from external funding bodies.	Audit what behavioural data is available on prioritised topics. Agree on ethical principles and draw on existing risk management protocols.	Promote the value of a behavioural lens to build policy makers' interest. Partner with external experts on projects. Focus the skills of an in-house team on communications, policy making, knowledge brokerage, and change management. Create a network of behavioural science experts across the government.
Growing	Expand a coalition of champions throughout the policy system.	Release a dedicated strategy for behavioural public policy that seeks both 'quick wins' and a longer-term vision. Expand the topics approached from a behavioural lens to include internal processes and external policies and services.	Use accountability structures and funding arrangements to encourage policy makers to collaborate with behavioural science experts.	Add simple checkboxes to consider behavioural science to policy processes. Consolidate ethical procedures that are appropriate for the context. Build bespoke data structures to build evidence on priority topics.	Build policy makers' capability to identify when they need expert support. Encourage external experts to build the capability of government employees. Access a wider range of more advanced research skills. Expand networks of supporters across the policy community.
Maturing	Build behavioural science into regular briefings of incoming leaders.	Integrate behavioural public policy into plans and strategies at all levels as part of business-as-usual.	Revisit how behavioural science evidence is governed and funded to ensure coherence with other evidence generation practices and approaches.	Build a people-centred, evidence-informed approach into the government's expected practices, standards, and guidelines for policy making. Explore new ways to engage citizens in research methods and policy design. Build behavioural outcome measures into the government's standard data collection activities.	Optimise the balance of internal and external expertise through partnerships and networks.

Case studies

Different paths to mainstreaming behavioural public policy are evident in the specific experiences of particular governments. The following sections – about Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, New South Wales (Australia), and the United Kingdom – demonstrate various routes to success, with behavioural science experts and enthusiasts adopting practices and governance models that make sense in their context.

Argentina

In July 2021, with the support of the Presidency and the Economic and Social Council, a dedicated unit of behavioural science experts (*Unidad Ciencias del Comportamiento y Políticas Públicas*) was initially created in the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs, in the Cabinet Office of the President in "*Casa Rosada*". After a cabinet reshuffle in August 2022, the unit was relocated into the Ministry of the Economy (Gobierno de Argentina, n.d.[1]) .

The mission of the unit is to promote the application of behavioural sciences for the improvement of public policies and government decision-making, in order to improve people's quality of life. Its objectives are: to explore and understand human behaviour and the way in which people make decisions to guide and design better policies; and to conduct dissemination, research, training, and education activities linked to behavioural science in the context of public policy.

As October 2023, the unit has executed more than 20 projects and interventions, and given more than 60 conferences, workshops and virtual and in presence interventions in national and international events.

The unit has selected projects and interventions considering the availability of data, the demand from policy makers, team members' knowledge and experience, and the execution times that made the actions feasible. The unit has conducted projects across various policy topics, including developing a chatbot to promote COVID-19 vaccination (in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Behavioural Insights Team), increasing digitising some interactions with the tax administration, stimulating breastfeeding in municipal health services, promoting detection and reporting of potential organ donors in hospitals, and other topics.

In addition to its own projects, during 2021 the unit organised a 'Call for Projects on Behavioural Sciences Applied to Public Policies', with the aim of promoting the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies to solve management problems across all levels of government (national, provincial, and municipal). The aim was to promote collaboration among academia, consultancy sector and different levels of government institutions.

The unit created the Argentine Network of Behavioural Sciences, with the objective of providing a framework of excellence and support for the design, planning, and execution of the unit's objectives and processes. The network brings together behavioural science academics and professionals, creates space for theoretical and methodological discussions, promotes training activities, enables exchanges with national and international experts, and coordinates with public officials and administrators. Approximately 200 professionals have joined and meetings have been held focusing on the unit's processes and areas of intervention. The network also aims to link its members with public administrators who wish to design public policies drawing on behavioural science evidence.

As a dedicated team in the centre of government, the unit has been limited in the number and scope of projects it has been able to execute in terms of the variety of application areas and population reached. Many topics of interest were discarded because organisational conditions did not support their realisation, and many others could not even be addressed or considered.

Some structural and institutional factors have hindered the unit's work. Tackling these would take substantial and sustained effort on a broad political, legislative, and administrative scale in order to promote

the use of behavioural insights as an additional tool for government regulation, which is usually focused on more traditional incentive- and information-based policies. Being located in a central agency of the federal government has made scaling difficult once an intervention has been tested and found to be effective. In many cases it has not been possible to transfer expertise to other government agencies to autonomously implement behavioural science tools.

The lack of reliable data, data structures, and processes for regular measurement and easy data sharing has complicated the design and testing of behavioural interventions. It has been difficult to complement or improve programs with behavioural interventions when these programs lack clearly defined objectives, sufficiently trained human resources, effective coordination across levels of government, and monitoring and evaluation plans. Staffing changes in policy areas due to cabinet restructuring have also caused delays and demanded repetitions during implementation.

Finally, the unit has experienced organisational cultures, mindsets, and attitudes that have complicated behavioural science activities. Some officials have resisted experimental evaluations, concerned about the appropriateness of denying a control group access to an intervention thought to be promising. A more general resistance to changes in policies and methods, and hierarchical leadership styles, have also introduced difficulties. Some senior leaders have seen behavioural science activities as a luxury or detail, amid other decisions or problems that are considered of greater urgency or magnitude. On occasion, government officials have been interested in behavioural science, but been overwhelmed by their workload and not felt management support to advance innovative strategies.

Nevertheless, the continuity of the implementation of behavioural insights into public policies and the support of international organisations may help to give momentum to behavioural sciences. The idea of the institutionalisation of a central, dedicated unit, linked with decentralised behavioural champions within different areas of the federal government, and partnering with state and local level authorities in the implementation of behaviourally informed policies, offers a scope for hope in the future development of behavioural sciences in Argentina.

Australia

Australia's federal government has a long tradition of behavioural public policy. A key example is Australia's compulsory superannuation scheme, which has counteracted present bias since 1992 by requiring employers to automatically put a proportion of employees' wages into a personal retirement savings account (Kingston and Thorp, 2018[2]).

In the 2010s, inspired by the academic literature and the emergence of behavioural insights units around the world, various Australian government organisations began setting up their own in-house teams of behavioural science experts. In 2016, the government established the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA), with the remit to apply and test insights from the behavioural sciences across the federal government. BETA is located within the government's central policy coordination agency, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), giving it the status and access necessary to start conversations across the policy system and convene coalitions of partners around priority policy issues.

Initially, BETA received seed funding and seconded staff from various government agencies, enabling it to demonstrate the feasibility of a central behavioural science unit. In 2017 a further time-limited funding envelope of three years came via a broader government innovation program, the Australian Public Service Modernisation Fund. After a string of successful projects, and a 6:1 return on the government's investment, the Prime Minister decided to maintain BETA's staffing from 2020 on an ongoing basis within standard departmental funding.

BETA co-develops projects with policy makers, scoping specific evidence production or brokerage activities that will meaningfully inform policy development, implementation, or evaluation. Under

semi-formal agreements, PM&C covers BETA's staff time while the partner agency covers practical project costs, such as research participant recruitment or graphic design services. Splitting the costs in this way has "encouraged a stronger sense of engagement" from policy makers (Ball, Hiscox and Oliver, 2017[3]). These agreements also support BETA's independence and integrity by distributing clear roles and responsibilities.

A clearly defined mission has helped guide BETA's activities. The wording has evolved over time with changing priorities and contexts, and is currently "to improve the lives of Australians by generating and applying evidence from the behavioural and social sciences to find solutions to complex policy problems".

BETA is a multi-disciplinary team of economists, psychologists, data analysts, policy experts, and project managers, with backgrounds in academia, the private sector, and government. The team's diverse skill mix allows it to conduct and translate research that is timely and practical. With a staffing count ranging in recent years between 24 and 30, BETA has the critical mass to maintain its diverse skillset, take risks in project selection, and train new staff in its distinctive practices and methods.

BETA has a strong focus on conducting rigorous primary research. At the start, this was embodied in the role of Research Director, a prominent academic brought in to sit alongside the Managing Director (who had a more typical government background). This model later evolved to an Academic Advisory Panel of seven academics from various disciplines who advise on BETA's projects and methods.

BETA is committed to transparency, including through a policy of publication by default for major research projects, presenting at public events, and maintaining a content-rich website. All of BETA's quantitative trials and evaluations have been published on its website, with trial protocols and analysis plans pre-registered. Most of BETA's diagnostic and advisory work (based, for example, on qualitative methods or literature reviews) has remained within government to inform particular policy decisions. But all primary research strictly follows Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, including independent review of research plans, methods, and materials by a university-based ethics committee. Mature and robust data management protocols and practices enable data sharing to occur with relative ease between government agencies.

Identifying the policy topics or processes that stand to benefit the most from a behavioural science perspective has always been a challenge. Secondments from policy agencies produced project ideas early in BETA's existence. Later, BETA conducted 'Opportunity Scans' within government organisations, involving interviews with senior executives, surveys of staff, and workshops with in-house behavioural science experts. Once BETA was more established, it triaged the requests it received using clearly defined criteria: the potential impact a project could have on Australians; how high a priority the policy topic was for the government; the fit between policy makers' needs and the skills BETA could offer; and the resources available. Most recently, BETA has begun proactively pitching work in support of key government agendas.

Early on, BETA found that quick, small-scale trials helped to build capability, demonstrate value, secure further funding, and build trust (Ball, Hiscox and Oliver, 2017[3]). While these projects still have their place when engaging with new partners or leaders, BETA's more sustainable funding and established reputation now enables it to also contribute a behavioural science perspective to conversations about complex, long-term policy problems. Expanding beyond bounded problems to tackle more complex policy problems has entailed an expansion from focusing on policy implementation to include problem diagnosis and policy design, and from using quantitative to mixed methods.

Building the capability of the APS to deliver behavioural public policy has always been part of BETA's mission. Early in BETA's journey it developed introductory materials for a broad audience, including online courses and an interactive tool to analyse the behavioural drivers of a policy problem. More recently BETA has shifted focus to providing richer support for smaller groups of policy makers, including through a network of behavioural insights champions and a bespoke, one-on-one coaching service. Finally, project work is an opportunity to upskill partners in the uses and insights of behavioural science.

The ecosystem of other behavioural science experts and teams throughout Australian government agencies has also grown. These local experts have developed enduring relationships within their organisations and rich content knowledge in particular policy areas, leaving BETA to work on topics that are cross-cutting, particularly high priority for the government, or that do not have a dedicated team in their associated agency. BETA also provides a secretariat function for a cross-government Behavioural Insights Practitioners Network, which periodically brings in-house behavioural science experts from 25 different agencies together to share lessons learned and best practices.

Canada

This section is adapted from a recent publication (Sanders, Bhanot and O' Flaherty, 2023, pp. 9-23[4]).

The Government of Canada established its first behavioural science team in 2015 inside the Privy Council Office (PCO), a central agency responsible for policy planning. Like most new public sector behavioural science units at that time, the team was small at first and it acted primarily as a 'knowledge resource' on behavioural insights and experimentation. It wrote papers and gave many presentations about the promise of this new public policy tool for leaders across government.

The team's first evolution took place in 2016, shortly after Canada's Prime Minister issued an Experimentation Directive for all federal department and agency heads (Impact Canada, 2017[5]). This directive asked Canada's most senior public servants to strategically invest departmental dollars in experimentation. It called for fostering "work environments … conducive to experimentation, innovation, and intelligent risk-taking," and explicitly named the team at PCO as a source of support, noting it would be available to "help create the conditions for implementing rigorous experimentation approaches."

In the ensuing weeks and months, myriad requests for support from across the federal government flowed in. Over the next two years (2017-2019), the PCO team initiated several partnerships with federal departments to design behaviourally-informed program improvements and test them with randomised trials, which demonstrated the real-world positive impacts of behavioural insights and methods.

The government's use of behavioural science changed significantly in 2020. In March 2020, just days after Canada closed its borders in response to the rapid growth in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States and abroad, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr Theresa Tam – a long-time champion of social and behavioural science – publicly emphasised the need to employ insights and methods from the field to develop and implement the government's response to COVID-19. Shortly thereafter, the Clerk of the Privy Council, the most senior public servant in the Government of Canada, reached out to the PCO behavioural science team directly for support on COVID-19 management and response.

The team was faced with a tremendous task: to produce rapid, evidence-based advice on issues that were evolving daily. Realising that randomised trials would take too long to produce relevant data, and that fieldwork could be risky given the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases, the team turned to rapid surveying and other online data collection methods to produce high-quality evidence on a tight timeline.

As a first step, in April 2020, the team implemented a longitudinal survey series to develop a baseline understanding of Canadians' thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses to COVID-19, and to keep track of changes over time. This study – the COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring Study (COSMO) – followed a cohort of 2,000 Canadians over 16 waves of data collection between April 2020 and December 2021. The first waves of COSMO were fielded just 3-4 weeks apart, generating new data and insights on an extremely rapid timescale. Eventually, COSMO was complemented by a series of 'deep dive' mixed-methods online studies to explore barriers and drivers of specific protective health measures, and later by more traditional field research and experimentation efforts.

The team's rapid delivery of valuable data and insights eventually drew attention from other areas of government. In 2021, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Natural Resources Canada

(NRCan) reached out to explore applying the team's research model to address climate change and improve environmental protection. In September 2021, ECCC, NRCan, and PCO together initiated the Program of Applied Research on Climate Action in Canada (PARCA), a program focused on understanding barriers to greater pro-climate and pro-environmental action in Canada, and producing evidence-based, behaviourally-informed strategies to address them. PARCA has now designed, implemented, and analysed data from more than 25 primary behavioural science research studies.

PCO's team now supports six programs of applied behavioural science research using this new model, and has grown to approximately 40 researchers and policy analysts. The team is collecting data on how people across Canada think, feel, and respond to issues as diverse as anti-microbial resistance, immigration, and adoption of new digital technologies. The team is using these data to provide evidence-based advice for senior decision-makers and design improvements to existing programs and services, which can then be tested using rigorous methods, like randomised controlled trials.

The team has recently re-initiated the Government of Canada's Behavioural Science Community of Practice, a network of behavioural scientists working across Canada's federal government. PCO co-chairs this network alongside the Public Health Agency of Canada's Behavioural Science Office, which was founded in 2021. Based on a March 2023 survey of the network, more than 17 Government of Canada departments and agencies now have behavioural science teams or employ behavioural scientists, totalling more than 100 public servants working in behavioural science roles. While a handful of these behavioural science teams were established before March 2020, a majority have been established since that time.

Canada's behavioural science story demonstrates the importance of at least three factors in growing the practice of behavioural science within government and applying it successfully in the longer term:

Senior-level championship. The Government of Canada's first behavioural science team experienced important periods of growth and change following the Prime Minister's 2016 Experimentation Directive as well as Canada's Chief Public Health Officer's call to use social and behavioural science to address the pandemic in 2020.

Demonstrating success and value. If not for the successes of its early demonstration projects, the team may not have been called upon to support on COVID-19 response and management. Successful demonstrations of the value and impact of behavioural science were foundational to the team's eventual growth.

Flexibility and adaptability. The team was able to realise considerable value by pivoting from its more traditional methods (randomised controlled trials) to new, rigorous methods that could produce data and insights on important behavioural challenges on a rapid timeframe. Ultimately, this shift in the team's approach resulted in a new way of working that has appealed to numerous partners across the federal government.

France

Following a series of exploratory projects that began in 2013, a team dedicated to behavioural sciences was established in 2017 with the creation of the Interministerial directorate for public transformation (DITP) within the French administration. This directorate is entrusted with the implementation of the government's public transformation program, which aims to foster a closer, simpler, and more efficient public action, ultimately leading to tangible improvements in the lives of French citizens and public sector employees. To achieve this, the DITP actively supports and ensures the delivery of high-impact policies, promotes the dissemination of innovative methods, and coordinates administrative action to simplify procedures and improve the quality of public services.

Comprising four behavioural scientists and one public policy expert, the behavioural sciences team receives public funding (through the *Programme d'investissement d'avenir* and then *Fonds pour la*

transformation de l'action publique) primarily to assist administrations in optimising their policies. Since its creation, the team has supported around 50 projects across various administrations. These projects generally involve a diagnostic phase (literature reviews and ad hoc studies), a phase of intervention prototyping, and a phase of experimentation or evaluation under real conditions (such as a randomised controlled trial). Depending on the circumstances, this operating mode can be adjusted to address specific issues, such as during the COVID-19 crisis. The team's work involves external experts, primarily engaged through interministerial public tenders, allowing access to a broader range of expertise. Most of the projects are initiated at the request of ministries and administrations.

The work carried out during these projects is often complemented by contributions to specific subjects in collaboration with other expertise hubs of the DITP. This particularly involves addressing issues related to the simplification of administrative communications (such as forms and language) and human resources matters (such as organisational functioning and recruitment).

The implementation of these projects is also an opportunity to extend the use of behavioural sciences. This effort to educate and disseminate is embodied through various initiatives, including publications (experimentation reports and guides), training (teaching and conferences), and external communication. More broadly, this approach reflects a commitment to bringing together administrations and researchers through the promotion of evidence-based public policies.

Beyond these numerous initiatives and achievements, the main objective is to foster the internalisation of behavioural and more broadly scientific skills within administrations, ensuring that these skills are mobilised as early as possible in the design of public action.

The Netherlands

The focus on behavioural public policy in the Netherlands initially emerged as a bottom-up process. From 2004 to 2014, several ministries and other government organisations were already addressing the importance of behavioural public policy and, in some cases, applying behavioural science insights. The turning point was in 2014 when three advisory reports were released by different advisory councils, all urging the Dutch government to better use behavioural science evidence throughout the policy cycle. These reports were discussed in May 2014 during an interdepartmental strategic meeting with top level public servants from all ministries. The Behavioural Insights Network Netherlands (BIN NL) was established during this meeting with the task of promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences among ministries and drafting a cabinet response to the three advisory reports. The main message of the cabinet response, sent to the Parliament in late 2014, was: "To make optimal use of behavioural science knowledge, it is important to systematically utilise this knowledge throughout the entire policy process, from policy development to policy implementation and supervision. Therefore, the ministries will invest in building (further) expertise in behavioural science knowledge."

Since 2014, more ministries have invested in applying behavioural science insights. This resulted in a growing group of colleagues familiar with the basic principles of behavioural science, the development of various behavioural tools supporting behavioural analysis, over 100 tested behavioural interventions, and a multitude of behavioural advice for the development of regulations, legislation, subsidies, and implementation processes. Over the years, small behavioural teams (with two to four full-time equivalent staff) have emerged in many ministries and government services, and in some cases, medium-sized teams (five to 15 full-time equivalent staff), particularly in policy implementation and supervision. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) advisory report "Knowing is not the same as doing" in 2017 (Keizer, Tiemeijer and Bovens, 2019[6]) emphasised the importance of considering people's 'ability to act', which was subsequently included as a quality requirement in the Netherlands Regulatory Impact Assessment (IAK), addressing among other things default options, biases, and heuristics.

Since 2017, BIN NL has received funding from all 12 ministries, enabling the network to undertake various activities, including an annual congress (the 'Day of Behaviour'), publications and an online community including a database of tested behavioural interventions. Every two years the network bundles the most recent interventions into a publication, "A Wealth of Behavioural Insights" (Netherlands Behavioural Insights Network, 2021[7]), which is sent to Parliament. The network's role was expanded in response to the 2017 WRR report, encompassing not only facilitating the exchange of knowledge but also supporting and promoting the use of behavioural science evidence, including considerations for testing 'the ability to act'.

While progress has been made, the normalisation of behavioural public policy within the Dutch government remains an ambition. Improving policy quality and leveraging behavioural science evidence go hand in hand. Through understanding the context in which people live and the factors that determine human behaviour, it becomes possible to create more effective policies. An important development in this regard is the implementation of the Policy Compass, which is the successor to the IAK. The Policy Compass is the central method to elevate the quality of the policy process within the Dutch government. The application of behavioural insights is integrally embedded in this Policy Compass. Additionally, the analysis and consideration of 'the ability to act' have been included as a quality requirement in the Policy Compass. A recent government-wide project has been initiated to stimulate the further development and integration of considering 'the ability to act' in the development of policies and legislation.

Finally, we are witnessing a more diverse application of behavioural public policy. In the early years, most work was done in the area of developing and testing interventions in policy implementation, such as trialling alternative emails and letters. Over the past few years, behavioural science knowledge has also been used to provide advice at the beginning of the policy process, when policy options are still in the development stage.

Leadership support has been crucial in reaching the current state, specifically from those directors that have been willing to employ behavioural experts, who bring new knowledge and are given the freedom to incorporate the behavioural perspective. Within this group of experts, 'intrapreneurs' – who work on establishing and expanding the behavioural function within the government – have been essential. Examples of intrapreneurs include the position of the BIN NL chairman, the recently created position of the government-wide coordinator on 'the ability to act', and several vocal coordinators of behavioural insights units.

The choice for a network structure to strengthen the decentralised teams has also been helpful. Most behavioural teams in the Netherlands are small. BIN NL enables them to join forces to organise activities with a government-wide impact. This ensures that more policy makers will become aware of and learn about the added value of the behavioural science perspective. Working together to organise these activities also leads to an increase in the number of connections within the network. Consequently, it becomes easier for individuals to find relevant assistance and expertise, and to collaborate on behavioural projects.

While progress has been made, several challenges persist, with the three most significant being:

1. **Further institutionalising the role of behavioural public policy advisors**. Within many government organisations the implementation of behavioural public policy still relies on intrinsically motivated colleagues, without a formal position as a behavioural advisor. This brings the risk that knowledge and networks within these organisations may disappear when someone leaves, and will need to be rebuilt by a new colleague a few years later.
2. **Integrating into the primary policy process**. While the behavioural perspective is integrated via the quality requirement on 'the ability to act', time constraints often put pressure on the quick generation of solutions. The challenge is to take more time for thorough analysis or testing of policy variants for their impact.

3. **Maturing of behavioural public policy**. This involves various aspects, including the establishment of dedicated research facilities to enhance the quality and rapid execution of behavioural research.

New South Wales (Australia)

In Australia, the New South Wales government was an early adopter of behavioural public policy. In 2012 it invited the United Kingdom's Behavioural Insights Team to help set up its own dedicated in-house team: the NSW Behavioural Insights Unit (NSW BIU). Originally located centrally in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the team later moved to the Department of Customer Service as part of a broader government strategy to focus on customer centricity.

The NSW BIU conducts its own projects focusing on direct, measurable improvements to government services and priority policy outcomes. The team complements these projects with an impact-oriented capability program named 'Behaviour Smart', which aims to build the capability and confidence of public sector organisations and public servants to use behavioural science in the delivery of government programs and policy. This capability program includes interactive workshops and training, regular drop-in sessions named 'BI clinics' that solve specific policy or service challenges, project blogs and guides, and the flagship endeavours discussed below. The NSW BIU also supports the capability of public servants to reduce unnecessary frictions in government services with a sludge toolkit, sludge-a-thons, and a Sludge Academy.

Frontline service staff immersion in behavioural insights

Several public sector organisations in NSW have received assistance from the NSW BIU to introduce or deepen the application of behavioural insights within their organisation while solving service delivery challenges.

For example, NSW Legal Aid, a state-wide independent government agency that helps people in NSW with their legal problems, recognised the benefit that behaviourally informed service delivery could have. To support Legal Aid in a structured way, the NSW BIU invited four Legal Aid staff, ranging from policy officers to legal practitioners, to participate in a six-month immersion in the NSW BIU. Each staff member worked on a behavioural challenge relevant to Legal Aid, receiving direct support from NSW BIU staff to build their behavioural insights capability while making impact.

Each of the four immersion program participants designed and implemented an intervention using behavioural science, details of which were published on the NSW BIU's blog (NSW Behavioural Insights Unit, 2023[8]).

As well as working on these four projects, Legal Aid NSW has established a Community of Practice, leveraging the expertise of these staff to identify other areas of application for behavioural science.

Impact focused learning: Behaviour Smart Bootcamp

The Behaviour Smart Bootcamp is a 'learning by doing' program. Through the Bootcamp, the NSW BIU provides 8 months of support to public sector teams, enabling them to both solve an immediate service challenge and build their own behavioural insights expertise so they can continue to apply the approach.

16 teams have completed the Bootcamp program in two cohorts. Teams have addressed diverse challenges, including minimising stonemasons' exposure to silica dust, supporting farmers, and encouraging visitors to NSW to visit small businesses. Most teams graduate having implemented an intervention embedded in behavioural science and made concrete steps to evaluate it.

The Bootcamp provides teams with both theory and practice-based learning. It is delivered through:

- Three in-person, interactive workshops. Here teams immediately apply what they are learning to their challenge, making progress on their project while also learning how to implement behavioural public policy.
- A behavioural science expert mentor usually from the NSW BIU. Each team is assigned a mentor with expertise in behavioural science who provides direct support on the application of theory.
- Self-guided resources. An online hub of resources is available for teams to access between workshops. These mirror and expand upon information provided in person, allowing teams to lift the capability of their broader agencies.
- A regular community of practice. Bootcamp teams from all cohorts meet to learn about additional behavioural science methodology and share triumphs and tribulations in their Bootcamp projects.

Evaluating capability building and impact

The NSW BIU's first priority in evaluating its Behaviour Smart capability focus is on identifying the impact of improved programs and services for people in NSW. However, the team has also assessed its impact on the skills and confidence of participating public servants.

In the 2023 Bootcamp the NSW BIU undertook a novel evaluation that included:

- Identifying the specific skills and behaviours that a 'Behaviour Smart' public servant would apply or demonstrate (such as 'using a framework to identify drivers and barriers to behaviour' and 'analysing behavioural data').
- Surveying Bootcamp participants before and after the program about how often they perform typical 'behavioural insights practitioner' behaviours in their work.
- Creating a control group of similar public servants who were interested in behavioural science but did not participate in the Bootcamp. The control group were asked to complete both surveys, and a sample of them were matched to the treatment group of Bootcamp participants on previous behavioural insights experience and role seniority.
- Using an anonymous but unique individual identifier in both surveys and matching as many participants in the pre- and post-surveys as possible.

This evaluation allowed the NSW BIU to measure the unique impact of the Bootcamp on participants' capability, by controlling for time and the impact of doing the survey itself.

In addition to improving services and having a direct impact on citizens, the BIU found from this evaluation that the Bootcamp improved capability. Bootcamp participants increased how frequently they used specific behavioural insights behaviours from before the program to after by 17.9% more than the control group. Confidence to use behavioural science at work also grew by 16.5% more in Bootcamp participants compared to the control group.

The NSW BIU is continuing to grow its Behaviour Smart program. This year the team will run another Bootcamp, iterating on previous programs to expand impact.

United Kingdom

In 2019, the Government Communication Service – the professional body for communication specialists across the United Kingdom (UK) government – created its own behavioural science team within the Cabinet Office to provide cross-government support to major government communications campaigns.

When the team was initially created, it had three main areas of focus:

- **Cross-government consultancy offering**. The team provided an in-house expert behavioural science consultancy service to departments across the UK government that were planning major communications campaigns.

- **Capability building** and raising the standard of behavioural science across government. The team designed and delivered new training programs to upskill non-behavioural scientists across government and local authorities in the use of behavioural science methods.
- **Crisis response**. The team provided expert advice across government and within the Cabinet Office on crisis preparedness and response.

Following an internal restructure, the team paused its consultancy offering so that it could focus on campaigns run centrally from within the Cabinet Office.

Unlike many other teams across the UK government which specialise in the design and delivery of randomised control trials (RCTs), the Cabinet Office's behavioural science team specialises in the use of secondary data, as well as behavioural science frameworks and theories, to make evidence-based recommendations about the most appropriate course of action. This approach was found to be better suited to the fast-paced and sensitive nature of the work required at the centre of government, especially given that most departments already have very high-quality RCT experts embedded within their own teams.

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10 Emerging practices

This report has collated and synthesised guidance from the global behavioural science community on what has been effective so far in mainstreaming behavioural public policy. **But these principles will need to be updated as policy challenges evolve, public administrations refine their operations, and behavioural science develops new insights and new methods.** This section draws on active discussions in the field to suggest areas where we may see new good practices emerge in coming years.

Co-creating with citizens

Over time we can expect continued growth in citizens' general familiarity with behavioural science – their "psychological capital" (Whitehead et al., 2014[1]). A more informed public opens up more opportunities for self-nudges: giving citizens the tools to shape their own choice environments (Reijula and Hetwig, 2020[2]). There may be opportunities for behavioural science experts to revise their role from being architects with an objective view of a policy issue, to being facilitators who actively convene coalitions of stakeholders to co-create social change (John and Stoker, 2019[3]; Hallsworth, 2023[4]) – a shift in mindset that many designers and 'design thinking' practitioners have taken already (Mosely, Markauskaite and Wrigley, 2021[5]). This shift might require new skills and new operating models within government organisations (Einfeld and Blomkamp, 2021[6]), with behavioural science experts jointly participating in discovery, design, and evaluation activities alongside policy makers and stakeholders.

A more aware population might also become better at noticing when governments are using behavioural science interventions to influence their behaviour. How citizens interpret an intervention when they perceive one has been called 'social sensemaking' (Krijnen, Tannenbaum and Fox, 2017[7]). Recognising and understanding how citizens react to governments' use of behavioural science is likely to become increasingly important for policy makers adopting behavioural science insights (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023[8]). Minimising backlash and maintaining a generally supportive environment for behavioural public policy may require governments to be transparent in their use of behavioural science, and potentially to explore new mechanisms for accountability to the public.

Attending to diversity

Policy makers and behavioural science experts sometimes design solutions for what they deem to be an average or standard user or citizen. As the policy making community normalises the insight that people can be influenced by behavioural, cognitive, and social factors when they interact with government policies and programs, the next frontier for exploration becomes how those factors differ across groups in society – and how policy interventions should adapt and respond to those differences.

Behavioural science experts are increasingly expanding their evidence generation beyond 'what works' to 'what works for whom and in what context'. Where data disaggregated by diversity characteristics is available, this expanded viewpoint can help policy makers understand if policies are reaching those most in need, and tackle complex social problems in a way that improves social equality (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023[8]). As data collection expands, administrative datasets are linked, and analytical tools –

such as machine learning algorithms – get more advanced, it will become easier for behavioural science experts to attend to diversity when diagnosing policy issues and measuring the effectiveness of possible solutions. Opportunities will also emerge for personalising interventions and changing how a policy is implemented based on features of the beneficiary (Mills, 2020[9]). Governments will need to ensure diversity data is collected, and then institute accountability mechanisms to ensure it is managed and used ethically and appropriately.

Policy makers are likely to be increasingly called upon to recognise their own position in the social systems they are trying to influence (Hallsworth, 2023[4]). In many cases, the behavioural public policy community does not represent the diversity of the community they are designing policies for (Liscow and Markovitz, 2022[10]). Recognising their own entanglement in a particular network of assumptions, norms, and values can help policy makers attend to diversity and make more effective policies. Governments could consider diverse hiring practices and participatory citizen engagements as mechanisms to help policy makers and behavioural science experts notice socio-cultural differences and integrate those insights into their work (See Principle 12).

Tackling complex social problems

Early forms of behavioural public policy focused on insights and methods from behavioural economics and psychology, leading to a toolkit and approach that was very effective at optimising solutions to policy problems that were well-defined and relatively predictable. Over time, however, behavioural science experts have been called on to contribute perspectives and evidence to help governments tackle complex, long-term, multifaceted problems – such as entrenched disadvantage or greenhouse gas emissions – which do not lend themselves to the focused analysis and structured tools that sometimes characterised early behavioural insights units (Feitsma and Whitehead, 2019[11]; Straßheim, 2020[12]; Ball and Head, 2021[13]). Recognising this, behavioural science experts have increasingly expanded their mindsets and methods to embrace a broader sweep of behavioural, social, and cultural perspectives (Hallsworth, 2023[4]; WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2022[14]). Adopting ways of working first developed by ethnographers, designers, foresight practitioners, and others has the potential to help behavioural science experts recommend policy solutions that are resilient to changes in context, scale, and time (Schmidt and Stenger, 2021[15]). These broader approaches require broader skill sets, further expanding the list of skills needed to produce rigorous and useful behavioural science evidence.

Framing policy issues as the outputs of socio-technical systems is one fruitful lens that can complement a behavioural lens (Diaz Del Valle, Jang and Wendel, 2024[16]). Systems thinking offers policy makers tools and approaches to map, understand, and model complex policy problems by thinking through the actors involved, how they are connected, and the rules and norms that govern their interaction (Nguyen et al., 2023[17]; Chater and Loewenstein, 2023[18]). Systems thinking can help behavioural science experts identify leverage points where relatively minor contextual modifications might produce cascades of effects across a whole system (Meadows, 2008[19]). Being mindful of broader connections can also help behavioural science experts identify diverse solutions, monitor for unintended consequences, or spot situations where the effect of a successful behavioural change is counteracted by a compensatory effect elsewhere in the system. Participatory research methods may help behavioural science experts understand the scope and nature of the system they are trying to influence.

More testing before policy decisions

There is potential for new and emerging data collection and analysis methods to dramatically increase the amount and scope of testing that happens before decision makers settle on a preferred policy solution. Emerging methods in the behavioural sciences can enrich ex ante policy evaluation (such as regulatory impact assessments), helping policy makers understand the likely effectiveness of different policy options.

A recent focus in behavioural science on replications and multi-site 'megastudies' – which test large numbers of interventions simultaneously using consistent methods (Duckworth and Milkman, 2022[20]) – will expand the knowledge base about what works in what context, giving policy makers greater confidence to trial an idea in their own jurisdiction. Greater confidence will also come from ongoing efforts to synthesise existing knowledge better, such as shared ontologies that enable artificial intelligence to accurately spot patterns across large corpuses of previous research (Michie et al., 2020[21]). Artificial intelligence tools will continue to mature, improving the depth and speed at which behavioural science experts can analyse big datasets to identify problems and suggest promising solutions. Knowledge brokerage and networking across policy makers and behavioural science experts – including those outside government – will be critical to realise the benefits of these methods.

More generally, there is scope for behavioural science experts to focus on fit-for-purpose methods: doing the most sensible research activity that meets policy makers' immediate needs with evidence that is sufficiently rigorous (Varazzani et al., 2023[22]). This could involve testing using the full spectrum of methods available, or establishing enduring data collection and analysis structures that facilitate inquiries on short timeframes. Governments will need to adopt a behavioural lens early in the policy process, and across their operations, to ensure the structures are in place to produce this timely and useful evidence.

More adapting after policy decisions

There remain opportunities for governments to adopt more agile approaches to policy implementation. Even once a policy decision is made, there remains a role for behavioural science experts to support ongoing evidence generation efforts. Active monitoring of the behavioural outcomes of a policy helps policy makers understand if their expectations hold true once the policy is rolled out on the ground and at scale. A productive learning loop between staff implementing policies and staff advising on policies can ensure lessons are shared and acted upon in future policy cycles (Lowe et al., n.d.[23]). Policy makers balancing conflicting needs of evidence generation and ethical access to beneficial programs might benefit from newer approaches to impact measurement that integrate early feedback into the study design, enabling adaptation over time (such as 'bandit' protocols that move people into intervention groups that appear to be the most successful) (Hallsworth, 2023[4]). Government may become more open to adaptive learning if senior leaders actively support these approaches, if funding decisions encourage active monitoring and review, and if behavioural science experts are structurally integrated or richly connected with staff implementing and evaluating policies.

Looking at government operations, processes, and people

Behavioural science experts in government have mostly focused on achieving external behaviour change. They have turned relatively recently towards *internal* behaviour change: improving the operations, processes, and decisions made within government organisations (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016[24]). In this space, as with all others, behavioural science experts are partnering with specialists who have focused on these issues for decades, such as human resources professionals and organisational psychologists. Governments that are open to experimenting with their ways of working stand to benefit from more efficient and effective processes that are people-centred and evidence-informed.

The interface between government operations and citizens is another fruitful area for further development. Adopting a behavioural lens to analyse citizen-facing services helps to identify unnecessary frictions that incur time, money, and psychological costs – on both citizens and the staff they interact with – and exacerbate social inequities. These 'sludge audits' (Sunstein, 2020[25]) offer a tangible, structured, and effective way to integrate insights from governments' efforts to reduce administrative burden (OECD, 2009[26]) and design user-centred services (McGann, Blomkamp and Lewis, 2018[27]). This behavioural approach to analysing a process can also be adopted to look at internal operations, such as recruitment or procurement.

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11 Conclusion and next steps

Governments have, to different degrees and in different ways, expanded their use of behavioural science evidence over the last decade, enabling policies to be developed, tested, and selected with a more nuanced understanding of the people involved in achieving change. The principles in this report are based on the practices that policy makers and behavioural science experts have found to be effective over that time. The OECD will continue to participate in the global conversation about how and where behavioural science can help governments tackle complex policy challenges.

Governments can use this report's good practice principles as a guide for considering their maturity across the different dimensions of mainstreaming behavioural public policy. Some governments have rich in-house behavioural science expertise; others have more advanced data or ethics practices. A review would help identify areas of strength, as well as areas that may warrant further attention. Such a review could be conducted by the OECD, or another independent third party, to ensure an objective assessment that is informed by comparisons across other administrations. A review could look at a whole government or focus on a particular organisation.

An initial framework of key review questions is outlined in the table below. This framework could be refined and expanded over time to produce a measurement framework that enables cross-country comparisons.

Table 11.1. High-level LOGIC framework for a behavioural public policy review

Dimensions	Guiding questions
Leadership	1. How do senior leaders talk about behavioural science publicly and internally? 2. How do managers talk to their leaders about behavioural science?
Objectives	3. How has the government or organisation defined and prioritised its use of behavioural science? 4. How are behavioural science activities and their impacts monitored over time? 5. How is the government or organisation balancing the use of behavioural science for external and internal policy making?
Governance	6. How are those responsible for mainstreaming behavioural public policy held to account? 7. How are resources mobilised to enable the use of behavioural science?
Integration	8. How is behavioural science incorporated into standard policy making procedures and guidelines? 9. How is the government or organisation ensuring the responsible and open use of behavioural science? 10. How are data structures built and managed to enable behavioural diagnosis and testing?
Capability	11. How familiar are policy makers with when and how to use behavioural science insights and methods? 12. How can policy makers access behavioural science expertise? 13. How is behavioural science evidence made to be useful in the policy process? 14. How is behavioural science knowledge and practice shared across the government or organisation?

There remain huge opportunities for policy makers to augment their policy design and implementation with a people-centred, evidence-informed approach. Governments can seize these opportunities by investing

in a well considered process to mainstream behavioural public policy. While contexts differ and challenges will change over time, such a process is likely to rely on the five dimensions of LOGIC:

- **Leadership**: vocal support from influential leaders who are well-supported by their organisations.
- **Objectives**: formal definitions of how behavioural science can and should help deliver strategic objectives, monitored over time.
- **Governance**: clearly allocating the responsibility for mainstreaming behavioural public policy and funding this appropriately.
- **Integration**: building behavioural science into standard processes, and working responsibly and openly based on efficient access to behavioural data.
- **Capability**: knowing when to seek accessible expertise that is useful in the policy process.

LOGIC: Good Practice Principles for Mainstreaming Behavioural Public Policy

This report outlines good practice principles intended to encourage the incorporation of behavioural perspectives as part of standard policymaking practice in government and governmental organisations. Evidence from the behavioural sciences is potentially transformative in many areas of government policy and administration. The 14 good practice principles, organised into five dimensions, present a guide to the consistent production and application of useful behavioural science evidence. Governments and governmental organisations looking to mainstream behavioural public policy may use the good practice principles and case studies included in this report to assess their current policy systems and develop strategies to further improve them.

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